

## SRILA PRABHUPADA'S SKYSCRAPER TEMPLE



**OR BACK TO HOME, BACK TO 340 WEST 55TH STREET**

By John P Stayton and Bhakta John Jagannatha

## DEDICATION

Beginning in 1969 His Divine Grace Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada reached out to me repeatedly through his adopted sons and daughters and his transcendental books. I missed his personal association and sanctifying presence due to my faulty vision but he left behind a mystical monumental home for me where I lived and was given the shelter of his lotus feet.

*The lotus feet of the spiritual master are the only way by which we can attain pure devotional service. I bow down to his lotus feet with great awe and reverence. By his grace one can cross over the ocean of material suffering and obtain the mercy of Krishna.*

*My only wish is to have my consciousness purified by the words emanating from his lotus mouth. Attachment to his lotus feet is the perfection that fulfills all desires.*

*He opens my darkened eyes and fills my heart with transcendental knowledge. He is my lord birth after birth. From him ecstatic prema emanates; by him ignorance is destroyed. The Vedic scriptures sing of his character.*

*Our spiritual master is the ocean of mercy, the friend of the poor, and the lord and master of the devotees. O master! Be merciful unto me and give me the shade of your lotus feet. Your fame is spread all over the three worlds.*

*Sri Guru-vandana / The Worship of Sri Guru*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

The reader should be aware that all the pastimes of Srila Prabhupada's Skyscraper Temple described in this book occurred during the years 1978 and 1979. I have kept the names and titles of the devotees that were present during those days as they were. There is no offense intended either to those who were prabhu and may be swami now or formerly were swami and now prabhu. The sole purpose is historical accuracy.

Beginning in 2016 I attempted to compose a minor history of personal pastimes at Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira of 340 West 55th Street, Manhattan, New York City which was published on the Sampradaya Sun website. My sole desire was and is to please the Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis in general, especially those who, like my self, missed the vapuh of His Divine Grace, and my former fellow residents in particular, and to please Srila Prabhupada and the resident Deities – Sri Sri Radha Govinda, Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, Lord Jagannatha, Lord Baladeva, Lady Subhadra and Sri Nathji. Perhaps I failed in that endeavor. That is all right. There was no loss. The endeavor was mine but the results, be they failure or success, are always in the lotus hands of the Supreme Lord. So I carry on with my inept endeavor, now in book form, for it is all I have to offer. I pray the reader will forgive my many faults.

*Lord Krishna knew that Sudama was hesitating to present Him the paltry chipped rice which was actually unfit for His eating, and understanding the mind of Sudama Vipra the Lord said, "My dear friend, certainly I am not in need of anything, but if My devotee gives Me something as an offering of love, even though it may be very insignificant, I accept it with great pleasure." (Krishna Book, Volume Two, Chapter 26, The Brahmana Sudama Benedicted by Lord Krishna)*

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## PREFACE

### MY INTRODUCTION TO THIS WORLD BROOKLYN NEW YORK CITY 1955

"...After that apartment, we moved into another roach infested rat-trap in East New York. It was eight flights up. It was here that I was expecting my second son. I never went to the doctor for pre-natal care with this pregnancy. We were lucky we had money to eat, much less for doctors. When the time came to give birth my husband took me to Greenpoint Hospital Clinic. As they were examining me I heard a person screaming at my husband about not bringing me to a doctor and the dangerous position he put me in. I felt bad for him, and embarrassed. I felt like such a pauper.

I gave birth to a 9 lb. boy. I named him John after my father. He was born by natural childbirth. It was a traumatic experience for me after the nurturing care I received in the Navy hospital where I gave birth to my first son. I thought it would be just as easy with the second one. The pain was so bad there were times I prayed to God to let me die.

Afterwards when I was home my father paid a visit. I told him I named the baby after him. I knew it would please him. He smiled and took me aside. He said I really couldn't afford to take care of another baby. He knew someone willing to pay \$10,000 for him if I would consent to sign him away..."

## INTRODUCTION

Hare Krishna! The following may be considered a "worm's-eye" view of devotional life at Srila Prabhupada's skyscraper temple in Manhattan, New York City. It is told from the perspective of a neophyte devotee who never achieved any important or elevated position within the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

I was never any good at book distribution, or preaching, or learning sastra, or cooking or giving class or leading kirtana or even chanting the holy names - HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

I was a resident of the Hare Krishna Building, 340 West 55th Street, New York, New York, 10019, during the years of 1978 and 1979. There were many other devotees who lived there before I moved in and after I moved out, and who had much more success in ISKCON and made much more advancement in devotional life.

I do not know if there is any value in hearing from someone fallen and insignificant.

I have a desire to please the Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis and Srila Prabhupada and Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Govinda by telling the truth about my hopefully Krishna conscious pastimes before I no longer reside in my present material body.

The Deities of Sri Sri Radha Govinda; Sri Sri Gaura Nitai; Sri Jagannatha, Sri Baladeva and Sri Subhadra; and Sri Nathji all can attest to the facts. Their Lordships all witnessed me rising early every day and attending the morning program and in the evenings attending the evening programs. They saw me attempting every day to serve the devotees and Srila Prabhupada and Their Lordships. They saw how my life changed for the better, how my eyes were opened and my heart cleansed, by the process of sadhana bhakti, also known as Krishna consciousness.

So many of the new generations of bhaktas and bhaktins have no idea of the immense magnitude of devotional service performed there - the truckloads of books distributed, the thousands of ecstatic kirtanas held, the

many incredible prasadam feasts honored and the multitude of devotees who participated.

Volumes may be written in description of the transcendental happenings at this once vibrant center of spiritual activities in loving service to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada and Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Govinda.

You will find here only a glimpse, a brief description, a faint impression of those memorable times. It is feared that we all may have to wait for some time for a full accounting from the *real* devotees that at one time called 340 West 55th Street their home. It is hoped that that is not the case. Let us pray to Sri Sri Radha Govinda that the wait is not so long. For the time being, I pray this paltry narrative may suffice.

I beg for the mercy of the devotees of Lord Krishna that they forgive my faults in this humble presentation. I am a person of no significance. My only saving grace is that I was allowed for a very short time to associate with the Vaisnava and Vaisnavi devotees of the Lord. I received their mercy regardless of my lack of qualification. I was permitted to chant the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE – in the association of the devotees. I was blessed to receive darshan of the Deities of Sri Sri Radha Govinda, Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, Lord Jagannatha, Lord Baladeva and Lady Subhadra, and Sri Nathaji. So many nice devotees gave their association to me freely and without reservation so that I could make advancement in my spiritual life. I thank them all. I owe them many lifetimes of thanks.

None of these wonderful things could have happened without the mercy of the pure devotee - *saksad-hari* - the most confidential servitor of the Supreme Lord, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada.

Srila Prabhupada is an ocean of mercy. He brought the sankirtana movement of Lord Gauranga to the western world. He was the catalyst whose association changed the lives of millions. We all owe him unlimited dandavats and unlimited lifetimes of devotional service. We are all eternally in his debt.

SRILA PRABHUPADA KI JAI!

*"Ksama, forgiveness, should be practiced, and one should excuse the minor offenses of others. Satyam, truthfulness, means that facts should be presented as they are for the benefit of others. Facts should not be misrepresented. According to social conventions, it is said that one can speak the truth only when it is palatable to others. But that is not truthfulness. The truth should be spoken in a straight and forward way, so that others will understand actually what the facts are. If a man is a thief and if people are warned that he is a thief, that is truth. Although sometimes the truth is unpalatable, one should not refrain from speaking it. Truthfulness demands that the facts be presented as they are for the benefit of others. That is the definition of truth." (Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Ch. 10 Texts 4-5, purport excerpt)*

Although I can only give my side of the story, so to speak, I wish only to speak the truth. I wish to be honest and accurate, regardless of how the truth may portray me and others in a less than positive light. I pray that the devotees will forgive the candid nature of my story. If anyone should complain about being portrayed in a less than positive light it is I. My status as an aspiring Vaisnava, as you will see if you have not already turned away, is so far below anyone else mentioned herein, that they should not take offense at what only amounts to the croaking of an annoying frog. The snakes will hear my noisy croaking soon enough and, mercifully, I will be silenced. For now I still have a few ribbits (that's frog language) left on my frog-like tongue.

I humbly prostrate myself before the Vaisnava and Vaisnavi devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, and beg their forgiveness for all my offenses, mistakes, illusions, imperfections and cheatings.

My personal experiences on the path of devotional service are similar to so many others, yet not quite the same. These experiences are by their nature varied and numerous because the successes and failures or the joys and sorrows of a particular prabhuji or mataji are bound to be different. The particular time, place and circumstance in which a person's body takes birth, the particular environment of persons, places and things in which a person lives and grows and the particular impediments and obstacles he or she has to overcome to attain the summum bonum of life; all these factors produce innumerable fresh unique experiences and realizations in bhakti yoga or

Krishna consciousness. I encourage everyone to write about their experiences as aspiring Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis.

Numerous spirit souls, more than a hundred, were residents of 340 West 55th Street. They lived and associated together and had many Krishna conscious pastimes.

*Your eternal servants at Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda Mandira,*

Ādi Keśava Svāmī / Jayādvaita Svāmī / Bhakti-tirtha Svāmī / Romapāda dāsa / Lakṣmī-  
Nṛsīṁha dāsa / Vakeśvara Paṇḍita dāsa / Muralivadaka dāsa / Saṅjaya dāsa / Kavidatta dāsa  
Rāgānuga-bhakti dāsa / Yaduṅṅuli dāsa / Nāma-saṅkīrtana dāsa / Jada Bharata dāsa /  
Mahāprabhu dāsa / Keśihā dāsa / Paramhāma dāsa / Yamarāja dāsa / Rāya Kṛṣṇa dāsa /  
Bhakta Caesar / Arihā dāsa / Bhakta Steve / Viśvatomukha dāsa / Divyallīlā dāsa / Kṛṣṇa-  
nāma dāsa / Dārūka dāsa / Rāmabhadra dāsa / Śrīla dāsa / Kāliya-Kṛṣṇa dāsa /  
Vyāsapāda dāsa / Pṛthu dāsa / Bhakta Raul / Janmāṣṭami dāsa / Jīva-tattva dāsa / Rūpa-  
Sanātana dāsa / Abhimanyu dāsa / Jagannātha dāsa / Bhakta Raymond / Bhakta Scott /  
Devārata dāsa / Hari-kīrtana dāsa / Trilokeśvara dāsa / Kṛta-kṛt dāsa / Tattvavīt dāsa /  
Sarvabhauma dāsa / Jāmbavān dāsa / Bhakta Tom Consavage / Rādhā-śaraṇa dāsa /  
Makalāsana dāsa / Ātmārāma dāsa / Vedavyāsa-priya dāsa / Keśihanta dāsa /  
Kūrmārūpa dāsa / Dīnaśaraṇa dāsa / Śrī Gopāla dāsa / Bhakta Steve / Bhakta Maurice /  
Bhakta Jeffery / Bhakta Charles / Siddhājana dāsa / Kṛṣṇa-bhakti dāsa / Toṣaṇa Kṛṣṇa dāsa /  
Nanda-kīśora dāsa / Bhīmasena dāsa / Devadeva Jagatpate dāsa / Mādhava dāsa /  
Gokūlarañjana dāsa / Paramārādhyā dāsa / Urjasvat dāsa / Adhokṣaja dāsa / Tāraka dāsa /  
Rāsarāja dāsa / Agraya dāsa / Nirāñjana dāsa / Dāmodara dāsa / Bhakta Jose / Bhakta Happy  
Darpahā dāsa / Bhakta Bob / Pañkajanābha dāsa / Kapindra dāsa / Vaikuṇṭhadeva dāsa /  
Pūru dāsa / Vidyābhūṣaṇa dāsa / Gadādhara Paṇḍita dāsa / Bindu Mādhava dāsa /  
Kaṇṇapura dāsa / Bhakta Richard / Harṇsarūpa dāsa / Mathureśa dāsa / Śrūtama dāsa /  
Satyarāja dāsa / Akūrā dāsa / Bhakta Jerry / Bhakta Manny / Bhakta Ray / Bhakta Al  
Harrington / Viprahita dāsa / Bhakta Roberto / Viṣṇugadā dāsa / Puṣpagopāla dāsa /  
Bhūmipati dāsa / Yogendra dāsa / Bhakta Don / Yudhiṣṭhira dāsa / Bhakta Mitch /  
Nirantara dāsa / Kṛṣṇa-kīrtana dāsa / Aniruddha dāsa / Akṣaya dāsa / Tirthapāda dāsa /  
Dhanvantari dāsa / Madana-mohana dāsa / Bhakta Richard Campbell / Bhakta Barry / Arun  
Patel / Jaya Prabhupāda dāsa / Jagajivana dāsa / Kṛṣṇa-sneha dāsa / Jhāna-gamya dāsa /  
Catur-vyūha dāsa / Bhakta Pete / Prāṇa dāsa / Sadācāra dāsa / Kṛṣṇotkīrtana dāsa /  
Preraka dāsa / Bhīma dāsa / Bhūta-bhāvana dāsa / Hari Murāri dāsa / Bhakta Tony / Bhakta  
Sam / Jyotnā dāsa / Bhakti-jhāna dāsa / Kaunteya dāsa / Bhārata dāsa / Pravocara dāsa /  
Bhakta John C. / Janmādyāsa dāsa / Viśvamūrti dāsa / Vātsalya dāsa / Bhakta Walter, Sr. /  
Bhakta Walter, Jr. / Bhakta Eddie Green / Bhakta Jose / Bhakta Eduardo / Antima dāsa /  
Bhakta Ivan / Añjana dāsa / Bhaktivinoda dāsa / Ādhya dāsa / Nīmāi Paṇḍita dāsa /  
Viśveśvara dāsa / Dharma dāsa / Nandikī dāsa / Adarśī dāsa / Badarī-Nārāyaṇa dāsa /  
Vyāsaputra dāsa / Śivārātri dāsa / Subhadrā-devī dāsa / Kāmā-devī dāsa / Bhaktin Linda /  
Dīna-bandhu-devī dāsa / Bhaktin Electra / Rāgātmikā-devī dāsa / Rukmiṇī-priya-devī dāsa /  
Mūlaka-devī dāsa / Kṛṣṇa-kathā-devī dāsa / Dakṣiṇāvārī-devī dāsa / Sevā-devī dāsa / Mahā-  
lakṣmī-devī dāsa / Gaṅgāgati-devī dāsa / Bhaktin Rhonda / Jārati-devī dāsa / Nanda-devī dāsa  
Vraja-vaneśvarī-devī dāsa / Yamunā-devī dāsa / Bhaktin Esther / Pāvani-devī dāsa / Sunīta-  
devī dāsa / Jāhnavā-devī dāsa / Nāradi-devī dāsa / Acyutapriya-devī dāsa / Devakī-devī dāsa /  
Bhaktin Lisa / Bhaktin Remati / Jāmbavātī-devī dāsa / Bhaktin Ramona / Madana-mohana-  
devī dāsa / Bhaktin Revatī / Vrajamaṇḍala-devī dāsa / Bhaktin Elaine / Bakula-devī dāsa /  
Bhaktin Clemencia / Bhaktin Margarita / Mādri-devī dāsa / Lalita-sakhī-devī dāsa /  
Mahāmāyā-devī dāsa / Murārī-devī dāsa / Śyāmā-devī dāsa / Mahāvegavātī-devī dāsa /  
Ananta-devī dāsa / Mādhavī-devī dāsa / Bhaktin Esperanza / Bhaktin Mary / Bhaktin Joanne  
Tulasī-devī dāsa / Nirāñjana-devī dāsa / Jananī-devī dāsa / Rādhārāṇī / Vidura / Mādhava /  
Lakṣmaṇa / Maṅgala-ārati / Keśava / Īśvara Purī / Bhakta Ken / Jagannātha Purī / Aśoka

Roster of residents of 340 West 55th Street 1979

My story is just one of many.

I beg for the mercy of the Vaisnava and Vaisnavi devotees of the Supreme Lord Bhagavan Sri Krishna that they may find some small portion of this simple presentation useful as an example of the mistakes, illusions, imperfections and cheatings to be avoided in the discharge of devotional service.

I searched and researched the dimly lit recesses of my memory banks, using my feeble mind and simpleton's intelligence, to recover some humble keepsake remnants and reminiscences of my youthful attempt at devotional service at the former monumental skyscraper Hare Krishna temple of 340 West 55th Street. I wiped off the accumulated dust and mold, cleaned and shined, inspected and re-inspected and then went through the process all over again.

*"The contribution of memory to knowledge is quite considerable and important. Madhva holds that Samskaras (former impressions) provide the necessary contact (sannikarsa) of the mind with the past. The possibility of such a penetration into the past, by the mind, is established, says he, on the evidence of Yogic perception of past and future, and is not, therefore, inconceivable. Memory experiences are not purely and simply the reflections of Samskaras, impressions, feelings or beliefs. They are direct apprehensions of the mind penetrating into the past. That the mind has got this power to penetrate into the past and the future is established on the evidence of Yogic perceptions of past and future, which are recognized as direct perceptions (Saksatkara) and not as inference. Such mental perception in the case of memory is, however, limited to the sphere of previously experienced objects or events by the nature of the limitations imposed by the Samskaras, which act as the connecting links (sannikarsa) with the past; whereas, in the case of Yogic perceptions of the past and future, such sannikarsa or connecting link is supplied by the power of Yogic merit itself. Hence, Yogic vision is more comprehensive than ordinary mental or memory experiences. This explains why memory is, by its very nature, connected with one's past experiences. What memory does is to recall the fact that the particular object was in such and such a condition or state at such and such time. It is irrelevant to the validity of memory that the former condition is no longer present. Madhva has thus done a great service to the cause of truth in restoring memory to its rightful place as a valid source of knowledge and therefore fully entitled to be accepted as a 'Pramana'." (Philosophy of Madhvacarya by B.N.K. Sharma 1962)*

The essential theme of this anecdotal narrative of my less-than-exemplary behavior as an aspiring Vaisnava may be summed up by the following:

In the mornings I sometimes listen to the local AM radio news broadcast in New York City wherein they announce the local news, weather, status of

traffic on the highways and byways of the city and the condition of the mass transit system and the various subway and elevated trains of the five boroughs. They present up-to-the-minute information on police actions, fires, accidents and delays which may be encountered by local commuters. The brief transmission of information concludes with this phrase:

"Now you know where not to go."

That is it exactly. It is my hope, by revealing candidly and publicly, my personal examples of insubordination to proper authorities, egotistical sense of entitlement, blundering immaturity and offensive rascaldom that one may know precisely where not to go and what not to do if serious with reference to advancement in bhakti yoga or Krishna consciousness.

*"Everything has its proper utility, and a man who is situated in complete knowledge knows how and where to apply a thing for its proper utility..."*  
(Purport excerpt, Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 2, Text 21)

I was a young fool of twenty-three years when I lived in 340 West 55th Street in Manhattan. Now I'm an old fool of sixty-six years living in Ridgewood, Queens. Four decades separate the two fools. Yet both exist simultaneously in my consciousness. I am able to view, as it is sometimes said "with the mind's eye", scenes from the past of my current existence in this particular material body, via the subtle aspects.

Please accompany me, as I travel two-score-years-plus into that past, to revisit my time as a young man, artlessly searching for his self, in the association of the merciful residents of Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandir, the disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.

## PROLOGUE

*"We want to build a World Center for ISKCON in Manhattan, among the skyscrapers, where people will pass by every day, and it will be like a beacon." Srila Prabhupada 1974 (The Strange World of The Hare Krishnas by Faye Levine)*

*A Tour of Our New Building in Manhattan, July 1975 -*

*"For a long time Srila Prabhupada had wanted the New York temple moved back to prestigious Manhattan. At long last the temple authorities were in the process of purchasing a twelve-story skyscraper in mid-Manhattan, at 340 West 55th Street, between 8th and 9th Avenues.*

*Because I was about to leave for India after my six-week stay, I was allowed to join Mother Silavati and a few others for a tour of the new facility. It was fantastic! Past the front lobby, with its reception desk, was a very large room - perfect for a temple room. The ground floor also had space for a boutique as well as the pujari rooms. In the basement we saw a commercial kitchen that needed a thorough cleansing, and a large dining room, slotted for a restaurant.*

*We rode up in one of two passenger elevators and on the second and third floors we saw several medium-size offices, two rooms big enough for prasadam halls and a one-hundred-and-ten-seat theater, complete with lighting and dressing rooms. On the third floor we also gained access to a huge, fenced verandah, the size of the proposed temple room two floors below it.*

*Off T-shaped hallways on the next seven floors were many small rooms that could house two devotees each. Two hundred devotees could live here comfortably.*

*The eleventh floor was planned for guestrooms and Srila Prabhupada's quarters. On the roof we had a bird's-eye view of midtown Manhattan.*

*The building felt eerie, and we knew why - many people had died here. It had been a nursing home. When we walked into one office, all of us felt the presence of someone - a spirit soul in a ghost's body. That problem would be solved by plenty of kirtan, which had the potency to dispel ghosts."*  
*(Srila Prabhupada is Coming! by Mahamaya Devi Dasi)*

## PART ONE PRABHUPADA IS CALLING



### CHAPTER 1

#### SIGHTING SRILA PRABHUPADA'S DISCIPLES.

The first time I saw the Hare Krishna devotees was during the year 1969. I accompanied my father to his place of employment in Manhattan. He was employed as a printer for a public relations company on Lexington Avenue and 59th Street. I spent the day collating stacks of papers. I was 14 years old.

My father took me out to lunch during the afternoon. We were walking down a typical crowded city street when I was stopped in my tracks.

A group of at least a dozen young men and women wearing pink, white, orange and different colored robes were dancing and singing. They were lined up in a long row, two deep, along the curb swaying side to side in rhythm. The men had shaved heads. Some were playing drums and little cymbals.

I halted, frozen, and stood there and stared at them while the novel sound vibrations entered my consciousness. I had not seen or heard anything like this in my short life. I was mesmerized. Hypnotized. I remember feeling concerned about them. They all looked so pale. I wondered how these people live. Were they living on the street? Do they have enough to eat? While I was standing and staring a beat up old van pulled up behind the

chanters and the rear doors opened and a few more men and women came out with more musical instruments and joined the party.

After a few moments my father realized he was walking alone and came back to find me virtually cemented to the sidewalk in front of the enthusiastic chanting party. I will never forget that first contact, in this lifetime, with Krishna consciousness via the disciples of Srila Prabhupada. More than fifty years have gone by and I still remember it just like it was yesterday.

#### A VAISNAVA VISITS THE CORNER BAR.

A curious thing happened one autumn evening in Ridgewood, Queens, New York City. A young man in saffron came for a visit. He was not a stranger. He just looked strange to me. Ridgewood in the 1970's was a neighborhood of lower middle class residents. It was a mix of mostly second and third generation Irish, German and Italian immigrants. There were streets and avenues like any other neighborhood. The better constructed two-family homes were on the quiet, less trafficked streets and the inferior four-family homes were on the busy wider avenues. My family lived at 303 Onderdonk Avenue.

Every few blocks there was either a church or a bar. Right down the block from my house was a bar and two blocks farther on was Saint Aloysius Church. I was in my teens. One evening as I was walking past the corner bar I noticed a familiar, yet unfamiliar, person standing outside in front of the bar and conversing with some of the usual crowd that patronized the establishment. He was dressed all in pink - pink wool cap, pink coat and a pink dress (dhoti). He stood out among the crowd of black leather jackets and blue jeans.

I stopped for a moment, my curiosity aroused by the extraordinary scene. As I watched from across the street he removed his hat. It was then that I recognized him. It was Jack Russo. We both attended the same catholic grammar school, Saint Aloysius, when we were children. His elder brother Anthony was in my class and Jack was two grades behind in the same class as my younger brother Paul.

What the heck?! I thought he looked crazy. Why in heck was he wearing a dress? And why was his head shaved except for a little pony tail in back? "He must be nuts," was what I was thinking.

At that time I had no recollection of the first time I saw the devotees chanting and dancing in Manhattan just a few years before. Then I was a small boy. Now, as a teenager, I had many useless interests and endeavors which occupied my rascal mind and consciousness, covering over that wonderful memory. I didn't make the connection.

I did not cross the street to talk with him. Why would I want to talk with a bald weirdo wearing a dress? I continued on my way.

I didn't know at the time that he would be one of the many disciples of Srila Prabhupada who gave me the mercy of their association and brought me closer to the lotus feet of His Divine Grace. When I began to visit the temple on a regular basis Jack even brought me up to his room, which he shared with Ramachandra das, and we sat together while he preached to me about Krishna consciousness. He left the movement at almost the same time that I moved into the temple. His initiated name is Krishna Kirtana dasa.



Marvel Comics Inc.

## CHAPTER 2

### GETTING SRILA PRABHUPADA'S BOOKS

The first time I purchased one of Srila Prabhupada's books was Christmas day 1972. I was 17 years old and completely disillusioned with just about everything in the world – wars and famines, poverty and racism, and especially Christmas commercialism. I just wanted to get away from everything for the night. I hopped on a train on Christmas eve and went to the Port Authority bus terminal in Manhattan. I bought a stack of my favorite Marvel comic books. I found a secluded seat in a waiting area lounge and planned to read my comics all night and forget about everything else.

It was well past midnight when a young black man sat down next to me. He started making comments about the great artwork of Marvel comics. I did my impersonal best to ignore him. But he wasn't going away. I knew from experience that he was either begging or selling. I was still ignoring. But he was persistent.

I finally looked at him as he pulled something out of a cloth bag slung over his shoulder. He took out a small soft-cover edition of Krishna Book Volume

One. He started praising the wonderful artwork of the Krishna Book. He opened the book and showed me the paintings inside. I was definitely attracted to the other-worldly activities portrayed on the pages.

I gave him a five dollar bill took the book and he left me alone. I looked at the transcendental pictures after he left and started to read the first page. I couldn't get past the first few sentences. I couldn't understand a word. How dull was/am I? I liked the paintings of Krishna's pastimes. I paid five dollars so I kept the book. A few days later I gave the book to a friend, Donald Powles. He noticed it on a bookshelf in my room at home and asked if he could read it. A few years later he taught me how to chant both the Hare Krishna maha mantra and the Panca Tattva mantra.

## SECOND KRISHNA BOOK.

On December 7, 1973 I joined the United States Navy. I was on my way to boot camp in the Great Lakes region. I was standing in a terminal with a large group of recruits in Chicago's O'Hare Airport when a pair of Hare Krishnas in full regalia – shaved heads, tilak, dhoti and kurta – started hitting up everyone in my group for donations. I knew what was coming next. Without thinking I pulled a dollar out of my pocket. Without looking I gave one of the devotees the dollar. He gave me a Krishna Book. When I got to boot camp I sent the book in the mail to my girlfriend, Anna Santangelo. Years later she was initiated by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami and given the spiritual name Usa devi dasi.

## CHAPTER 3

### ADRIFT IN THE MATERIAL WORLD.

In 1975 I was discharged from the Navy. I stayed at home for some time. My mother had remarried. I did not get along with her new husband. He stole my money. I caught him red-handed rifling through my belongings in the middle of the night. I moved out and drifted around. I lived with a friend in the neighborhood until he moved and I was without a place to live. I moved to a small one room apartment in an 'SRO', a single room occupancy hotel, on 8th Avenue and 17th Street in Manhattan.

My room was on the fifth floor. You had to climb the five floors up a winding spiral staircase. There was no elevator. I shared the room with a little mouse who visited from time to time. The unsanitary bathroom and shower were down the hall. There was a bare light bulb in the bathroom attached to a wire hanging from the ceiling. There was a broken window with no curtain right next to the shower. The shower was a 4 legged cast-iron tub with no curtain which gave very low-pressure cold water. Don't even ask about the toilet. The hallway regularly reverberated with the loud sounds of disturbing arguments. Yelling and screaming and threats of bodily harm emanated from the apartments of my neighbors.

Only two of my friends from the old neighborhood came to visit, Thomas "Tommy" Viola and Walter "Butch" Farrell. They were shocked and embarrassed for me and my austere living conditions. I worked full-time, five days a week, as a messenger for Lloyd's of New York Messenger Service, near Grand Central Station in Manhattan. I earned minimum wage which was \$2.30 per hour. A subway token cost 50 cents. There was no such thing as a metro card.

I was living on sandwiches of white bread and cold cuts (animal carcasses factory processed into variously shaped slices and flavors and packaged for human consumption and material profit). I was using practically my entire salary to pay the rent. It was a miserable existence, barely making ends meet, living (?) paycheck to paycheck, with no hope of improvement.

## FROM THE FRYING PAN INTO THE FIRE.

My father arrived from Florida one day to visit my elder brother in Ridgewood. When he visited me and saw my living conditions he didn't hesitate to tell me to pack my things and return with him to Florida. At first I stayed with a relative in Fort Lauderdale. That didn't work out so my father arranged for me to move in with my mother, who had recently divorced and migrated to Miami. A cousin of mine lived nearby and her boyfriend owned a bookstore and he gave me a job.

What a job! It was an adult bookstore that sold pornographic books, magazines and implements. I worked alone as the cashier from noon until midnight, six nights a week. The whole enterprise was an eye-closing experience to say the least. I had no other way to acquire money. I worked and saved and ignored the hellish surroundings. I waited and planned for the day I would have enough money to buy a car and get away from everything and everyone.

Months passed when one day my father came to visit my mother's apartment. He was aware that I was saving to purchase a vehicle. He informed me that a friend of his was selling a car. I asked him what his friend's car would cost. He responded "How much do you have?" I told him I had saved 650 dollars. "That is exactly how much he is selling it for," my father said.

What a coincidence!

No. There are no coincidences.

Needless to say, I never saw the car. I never saw the money again. I guess that was the cost for all his efforts in arranging my move to Florida. Being the weak-willed silent type I said and did nothing. I worked a few more weeks, took my salary, said goodbye to my mother and cousin, and took the first bus back to New York City.

## LORD CAITANYA'S MERCY.

I arrived at the Port Authority building in New York City in mid-November 1977 with only a couple of dollars and my Navy sea-bag packed with my few belongings. Not coincidentally I left Florida around the time His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami concluded his manifest pastimes here on Earth. I found a public telephone, called my elder brother and asked him to please come and pick me up. He was surprised but he agreed to come and get me, but it would be a few hours. So I waited. What else could I do?

As soon as I finished my phone call a smiling young black man dressed in a suit and tie and wearing thick black-framed glasses came up to me. He asked if I was new in town. I gave him a suspicious look and curtly said, "No." "Are you waiting for someone?" he asked. "Yeah," I said in a more unfriendly tone. He reached into the bag he was carrying on his shoulder and pulled out a Bhagavad-gita As It Is and put it in my hands. "Here is something to read while you wait. Just give a donation, whatever you can give." He stood in front of me, still smiling.

*"All of these were great kings and were especially favored by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If a devotee is not mature, the Supreme Lord will take away all his opulence. This principle is stated by the Supreme Personality of Godhead – yasyaham anugrhnami harisye tad dhanam sanaih: 'My first mercy shown to My devotee is to take away all his material opulence.' Material opulence detrimental to devotional service is taken away by the Supreme Lord, whereas a person who is mature in devotional service is given all material facilities." (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 4.30.19)*

My great fortune is this – I have received the mercy of Srila Prabhupada and Krishna throughout my life. Time after time after time the Supreme Personality of Godhead has taken away all my material attachments and opulence in order to bring about my complete surrender to Him. Time after time after time Srila Prabhupada has reached out through his surrendered disciples and offered the cooling rays of the benediction moon, the mercy of Lord Caitanya's sankirtana movement.

My great misfortune is this – I still have not learned my lesson. After three score and more years, I am still a stubborn, puffed-up, ignorant, immature, fallen fool who refuses to surrender. As in the above verse, I am still

approaching the beginning stage, the neophyte stage, the kanistha-adhikari stage, the first mercy, the removal of material attachments. I have not made any spiritual progress in so many years.



## CHAPTER 4

### SRILA PRABHUPADA'S SKYSCRAPER TEMPLE.

The first time I visited the Hare Krishna Center at 340 West 55th Street was in the early part of 1978. A small group of friends convinced me to accompany them to the temple on 55th Street in Manhattan. One of the friends was the person that took that first Krishna book from my bookshelf. Another friend in the group was the former girlfriend who received the Krishna book sent from boot camp.

We took the Manhattan bound L Train from Dekalb Avenue in Bushwick to 8th Avenue and changed to the uptown A Train, and rode that to 59th Street. A short walk of four city blocks downtown on 8th Avenue, a right turn on 55th Street and half way up the block we were there. The building was located on the south side of the street. A very large vertical line of golden letters on the side of the building spelled out the words HARE KRISHNA. Below those transcendental words there was a yellow awning over the entrance doors with the words HARE KRISHNA CENTER.

At the entrance I briefly hesitated. What I remember most, the very first and most lasting impression, was the lovely aroma permeating the atmosphere and enveloping the building.

I want to describe properly how it felt standing in front of the entrance to the temple and the initial sensation of that transcendental fragrance. It was an alluring mix of scents that my blunt material senses had not previously encountered in this lifetime – Sri Sri Radha Govinda prasadam! An irresistible bouquet wafted out through the front doors surrounding me. Imperceptible lotus-like arms of nectarean fragrance embraced me lovingly gently pulling me inside.

Once inside, the first place we visited was Govinda's Boutique located just to the right of the entrance doors. Inside the boutique Kapindra dasa prabhu introduced himself. From that moment on until the moment I walked out of the store, the prabhu preached to me non-stop. He sold me the book Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers and a box of first class incense. He was very friendly and not a pushy salesman. I left the store satisfied with my purchases even though I had no intention beforehand of buying anything. I never thought there would be a store inside of a temple.



Kapindra dasa (ACBSP)

Our next stop was the temple room. I removed my shoes and entered and bowed down following the example of my companions. There was a fire sacrifice taking place on one side of the temple room. Adi Kesava Swami

was officiating. I thought he was a young teen and was surprised that such a youthful American could be speaking fluently in a language (Sanskrit) which I had never heard before. He was pouring liquids and tossing grains on the fire in the center of a roped-off area and was in charge of the whole affair.

Even though everything about it was so foreign to me I had the distinct feeling of familiarity as if I had experienced all this before, although I had never seen anything like it. In my heart and soul I felt that I had finally come home. It all seemed so natural. It was that quick. I wanted to be a part of this, whatever this was.

Then there was singing and dancing (kirtana) and unusual looking drums (mridangas) and little hand cymbals were being played. I was given a pair of the little cymbals (karatalas) and I could not keep the beat. A simple 1-2-3 beat and I could not get it right. How pitiful and spastic. I don't recall anything about the Deities on that first night. I apologize to Their Lordships. I do remember that in front of each of the Deities there was a male devotee standing on the side and facing the audience as a security measure in case someone tried to climb onto the altar.

After the kirtana there might have been a lecture, but I don't recall that at all. I do remember taking prasadam. There was a large room upstairs and we sat on the floor and ate. One devotee came and sat next to me and asked my name. I told him my name and I asked him for his name, and he told me to just call him Jack. We had a very nice conversation. He was also not a pushy type of salesman. We just conversed pleasantly about life in general and Krishna and devotional life. I was left with a positive impression about temple life. His spiritual name was Jada Bharat dasa.

Some things I heard while honoring prasadam: a devotee sitting nearby and preaching rather strongly to a small group. There was spicy hot coconut chutney which burned the lips. It burned my lips. When one of the guests mentioned to him that his lips were burning he explained it was due to the sinful activities of the guest. Another devotee entered the room conversing with another devotee. He had just returned from his first pilgrimage to India. He appeared very blissful as he described the beautiful peacocks, the numerous temples, and the streets full of devotees in dhoti and sari

chanting the holy names - HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA  
HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

BECOMING A REGULAR.

When I got back to my apartment that night I was a changed person. I started waking early in the morning and chanting the holy names. I wasn't chanting 16 rounds but I was chanting. My room had east facing windows. Every morning I would watch the sunrise. I was writing poetry every day. I was a sort of hippie in those days - long hair, beard, marijuana, rock and roll music and so on. I was also into sports and health. I rode my bicycle everywhere. I played basketball every day. I was practicing a little hatha yoga.

Every Sunday I attended the free love feast at the Manhattan temple. At first I went with a small group of friends but after a few weeks I was going alone. I never thought of not going. It became an integral part of my life. I didn't know it, but I was being purified by engaging all my senses in serving Krishna by smelling the incense, seeing the Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis and the Deities, hearing and chanting the holy names, and tasting the prasadam.

I would always stop in at Govinda's Boutique and listen to Kapindra prabhu preach to me and then purchase a book and some incense. I purchased two orange t-shirts, one with Krishna's three-fold bending form known as Syamasundara holding a flute, with the word "Govinda" and the other with Lord Jagannatha, Lord Baladeva and Lady Subhadra on the front with the words "Jai Jagannatha". I would wear one or the other every time I visited the temple.

As my spiritual life was progressing my material life was changing. The people that I was living with were not appreciative of my new spiritual leanings. They became puffed-up and demonic. They were of the opinion that they already knew everything there is to know. I had to move out after they began stealing from me. I lost my girlfriend too, Susan Kaz, even though she also had persuaded me to make that initial sojourn to the temple.

Every Sunday I would attend the kirtana and lecture and then stand in line for the prasadam. One evening I was standing in line wearing my Govinda t-shirt when a devotee approached me. He invited me to a special room

where I could take prasadam with a group of devotees. He brought me to a room filled with devotees preaching to guests while taking prasadam.

All the Vaisnavas with dhoti and shaved head and sikha and tilaka sat on one side of the room. The guests sat on the other side facing the devotees. I sat down with my plate and observed and listened. I remember some of the devotees, all disciples of Srila Prabhupada, who were there: Praghosa dasa, Laxmi-Nrsimha dasa and Visnu Gada dasa. They were enthusiastically preaching non-stop to the guests.

I finished my plate of prasadam and the devotee who brought me to this room, Adhoksaja dasa, invited me to accompany him to another "special" room to hear from another devotee. We walked upstairs to a small office where I met Niranjana dasa. He spoke with me for a long time. He invited me to spend the night in the temple. He defeated every argument that I had about not staying in the temple overnight. So I stayed.

## PART TWO ASHRAMA LIFE

### CHAPTER 5

#### MOVING IN.

I do not recall many details of that first evening. It was late at night when I finally gave in to Niranjana's many reasonable and convincing assertions that I should spend the night in the temple. I do not recall where I took rest or what time I awoke. I attended Mangala-arati and greeting of the deities and honored breakfast and lunch prasadam with the temple residents.

As previously mentioned, I stayed on a Sunday night, and at the end of Monday Niranjana again persuaded me to stay overnight. And Tuesday. And Wednesday. It was a very natural lifestyle transformation for me personally. I never thought I was becoming a vegetarian or a yogi or that I was giving up this or that. I enjoyed everything I was doing and didn't think twice about leaving. I wanted to stay. I was still attached to my long hair and material lifestyle. I had an apartment and a job. I had to make up my mind to give them up.

On Friday of that same week I traveled to my job in Queens with Niranjana and collected my last paycheck. We then went to my apartment at 592 Fairview Avenue in Ridgewood, Queens with a small group of brahmacharis and cleaned out my material possessions. I had been working in lumber yards and factories and so had accumulated many hand tools, electric tools and maintenance supplies. We packed them into a temple van. I donated my last check and all of my tools and hardware and all the rest of my meager belongings to the temple.

While we were in the midst of all this activity, my elder brother Lawrence arrived unexpectedly. I used to exercise with weights at home. He would always say he would like to come over and work out with me which he never did. He chose the perfect day to come for his first workout. Needless to say he was somewhat taken aback to find a small parade of Hare Krishnas, with shaved heads and saffron robes, walking up and down the stairs from my second floor residence carrying all my personal property and loading everything into an orange van parked in front of the building. I spoke with him and he was very understanding. He was aware of my recent association with the devotees. We hugged and he went home. After the

last of my material possessions were taken out and loaded into the van I went to my new home and began a new life.

I shared a room with a small group of fellow bhaktas. There was bhakta Raoul, bhakta Mitch, bhakta Al, bhakta John and myself – also bhakta John. I was a bit taller than the other bhakta John so I was called bhakta maha John to distinguish between us.

Now that I was a bona fide resident of the temple it was time to shave up. During my first week I had received a complaint about my hair clogging the drains in the communal shower from a very tall brahmachari named Visva Murti dasa. I was taking lunch prasadam one afternoon. Jaya Prabhupada dasa was standing nearby looking at my long hair. He sarcastically remarked "Oh, to be a hippy." I guess they did not appreciate the stool mop on top of my head. Damodara prabhu did the honors with an electric buzzer and I shaved up.

Now I could wear a dhoti. I was not allowed to wear a dhoti until I shaved my head. I was given a few dhotis and kirtas. After some instruction I put on a dhoti for the first time.

Attending the morning program for the first time with shaved head, sikha, dhoti and kurta was very different from the previous mornings in jeans, t-shirt and long hair. Then I did not feel as if I belonged. I stood out like a sore thumb or a duck among swans. It was also completely different from the Sunday Love Feast kirtanas I attended before moving in. At the Sunday kirtanas the majority of the persons were dressed in typical western dress. The minority wore dhoti and sari. Although everyone present was a devotee not everyone was dressed like one. The atmosphere was just different.

That first Mangala-arati, when I wore dhoti and tilaka, was an initiation into something out of this world, yet so natural and normal. The chanting and dancing for Sri Sri Radha Govinda and Sri Sri Gaura Nitai and Their Lordships Jagannatha, Baladeva and Lady Subhadra was especially enlivening for me because, as I have mentioned before about my very first time in the temple, I felt that, although I wasn't conscious of the fact that I was spiritually homeless, or that I was subconsciously searching for my home, the place where I truly belonged, being in the association of a hundred or so

Vaisnavas in dhotis and saris enthusiastically worshipping Srila Prabhupada and Sri Krsna in the temple room early in the morning awoke something very sublime inside of me. It was a physical and emotional and spiritual feeling that I had not experienced before in this lifetime. It may have been the ecstasy of experiencing a higher taste but I don't really know. I don't presume to know what it is to experience spiritual ecstasy. I just knew that I didn't want this new overwhelming ecstatic feeling I was experiencing to end. It was very enlivening but also very humbling. It was enlivening to encounter this sort of all-consuming instantaneous happiness from such a simple activity. It was humbling to realize that I had wasted so many years of my life in ignorant tasteless material pursuits when I could have been here.

I wanted to learn not only how to dress like a Hare Krishna devotee but how to live the life of a sadhaka.



BHAKTA JOHN

## CHAPTER 6

### THE BHAKTA PROGRAM.

The Bhakta Program was located on the northeast end of the sixth floor of 340 West 55th Street. New recruits to the Hare Krishna movement were given training in the basics of bhakti yoga and ashrama life. Niranjana dasa was in charge. He was ably assisted by Damodara dasa and Adhoksaja dasa.

In the Bhakta Program we were taught the basics of sadhana or the process of awakening our dormant Krishna consciousness. By nature we are all Krishna conscious. Due to illusion (maya) we are forgetful of our constitutional position as servant of Krishna.

We were taught how and why to properly chant Hare Krishna on japa beads, 16 being the minimum number of rounds or 1,728 maha-mantras, to precede each round of 108 maha-mantras with the Panca-tattva maha-mantra for the mercy of Lord Caitanya and His associates, and to pronounce each syllable clearly and distinctly with feeling and attention. The maha-mantra is the sweetest of all sweet things and the most auspicious of all auspicious things.

We were taught how to mark our bodies with tilaka and the mantras to chant before applying tilaka and while applying tilaka. We were taught how to make and wear caupins (brahminical underwear) and how to wear a

dhoti. We learned the importance of rising early in the morning and once awake, to offer prostrate obeisances to Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Radha Govinda. We learned the four regulative principles – no meat eating, (no consumption of meat, fish, eggs or poultry), no illicit sex, no intoxication and no gambling. We were taught the basics of Guru, sadhu and sastra, the necessity of hearing from advanced devotees and how to properly associate with and serve the devotees. We were taught how and why to offer our foodstuffs (bhoga) to Krishna, what was offerable and what was not, how to honor the offered foodstuffs (prasadam), and the importance of attending the daily program, morning and evening, in the temple.

Generally speaking it was all about love and devotion as opposed to lust and commotion. Always remember Krishna and never forget Him. We learned cleanliness both internal and external.

Most importantly we learned how His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami gave us this divine process of bhakti yoga. Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Radha Govinda were the center of all activities. As a matter of fact, because everything, and I mean EVERYTHING, was Srila Prabhupada said this and Srila Prabhupada said that, and Srila Prabhupada did this and Srila Prabhupada did that, and only Srila Prabhupada's original unchanged books, the same books that are the foundation the Krishna consciousness movement was built upon, were read and studied and quoted and everything was –

**PRABHUPADA – PRABHUPADA – PRABHUPADA – JAI PRABHUPADA!**

For the first few months that I lived in the temple I was not even aware that His Divine Grace was no longer physically present. I had no reason to inquire nor did anyone inform me. That is how cent per cent all devotional activities at 340 West 55th Street were still lovingly inspired by and lovingly centered on and lovingly based upon the example and teachings of the Founder Acharya.

**SRILA PRABHUPADA KI JAI!**

The Bhakta Program was a miniature ashram unto itself. The bhaktas in the program were kept separate and isolated from the general populace of the temple in some ways, but for the most part we participated in the temple activities with the rest of the devotees.

In the mornings we would rise early and take a cold shower and apply tilaka and dress in clean devotional attire and attend the morning program in the temple room with all the devotees. After Mangala-arati, Prema-dhvani, Nrsimha prayers, and Tulasi-arati the matajis would leave the temple room to chant japa upstairs. The majority of the male devotees would chant japa in the temple room. At that time the overwhelming majority were brahmacaris and direct disciples of Srila Prabhupada.

Some would sit yogi style, some would stand and some would walk in circles around the temple room - all chanting the holy names - HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE - on japa beads. I would be one of those walking in circles or standing on the side. If I sat down I would have fallen asleep.

I would try to hear the mantras as I chanted but my mind would inevitably wander off somewhere. On the surface it is just so many metaphysical syllables that you are pronouncing and hearing. That is on the surface. In order to make advancement in Krishna consciousness you must go deeper, much deeper. Krishna consciousness is an ocean of bliss, an ocean of nectar. You cannot experience the full purifying effect by just dipping your toe into that ocean. You must dive in.

As it says in the Gita – the mind can be obstinate and difficult to control. I would hear what I was chanting for a few minutes, attempting to follow the example of those around me to purify myself with the spiritual sound vibrations, and then without consciously being aware of it, my mind would think this and that and the other thing and make so many plans and remember so many mundane activities from the past and before I knew it I wasn't hearing Hare, Krishna or Rama anymore. I had to constantly bring my rascal mind back from its nonsense meanderings. I still do.

I would observe the devotees all around me as they chanted. Some were chanting so intensely it appeared that nothing could break their concentration or attention to their personal anti-material sound vibrations. Some devotees would stop chanting every so often and have brief friendly Krishna conscious conversations with their god-brothers, sharing their realizations, and then continue chanting. Others had Bhagavad-gitas or Bhagavatams or Caitanya-caritamrtas and would take momentary breaks

and read from Srila Prabhupada's books for inspiration and then return to chanting.

It was enlivening and encouraging for a neophyte like me to be in the midst of so many nice devotees during the auspicious brahma-muhurta hours chanting the holy names. It was like being inside of a transcendental beehive, surrounded on all sides by devotional buzzing bees engaged in producing honeycombs composed of spiritual sound vibration, the whole atmosphere humming with the holy names of Hare, Krishna and Rama. It was a spiritually surcharged way to start the day. The sound of the maha-mantra from the congregational kirtana, the kirtanas will be discussed in depth later, and japa would reverberate in my consciousness all day long. I would take rest in the evening anxious to rise early the next day to once again participate in the nectar of bhakti rasa.

In my fervor to rise as early as possible every morning, to be one of the first in the communal shower, dress and start on my sixteen rounds and be in the temple room before mangala arati, I was committing an offense to a Vaisnava and eventual life-long friend due to my ignorance. If you drive a motor vehicle through a red light you will get a ticket regardless of whether you know it is against the law or not. It is the same with karma. Ignorance is no excuse. Every action has a reaction.

Although there were wooden bunk beds for the bhaktas to take rest at night I would take rest in a sleeping bag on top of a thin straw mat on the floor. I had been taking rest that way before moving into the temple and have always taken rest that way, even up to this day. I have not slept in a bed since I was a child. Austerity is the wealth of the brahmana.

Bhakta AI, who later was initiated by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami and received the spiritual name Akrura dasa, would also take rest in similar fashion. He would rest closest to the door. When I rose up in the morning at 0230 or 0300 to rush out the door I would step over him as he took rest. That is disrespectful and an offense to the jivatma and to Paramatma, Krishna in the heart of every living entity. I don't know how many times I committed that offense before kind-hearted Bhakta AI humbly and patiently explained it to me. I offered my sincere apologies and we both offered our prostrate obeisances to each other. I did not commit that

particular offense again. My ignorance found other ways to offend, as will be seen.

## CHAPTER 7

### PRASADAM.

When I moved into the temple I left my previous life behind. With the exception of my elder brother Lawrence, none of my relatives or friends knew that I was now a resident of the Hare Krishna Center in Manhattan. In those days there was nothing like the instant communication devices that we have today. There were no cell phones, personal computers, Internet or social media. Phones were attached to wires attached to walls, computers were as big as a family-size refrigerator and were used for calculating numbers for corporations, and the Internet did not exist. You couldn't check someone's status on Facebook or Twitter or send them an e-mail or text. Current events were reported in newspapers, on television and radio.

There I was, shaved head with sikha, body painted with tilaka, wearing Tulasi neckbeads, kurta and dhoti, serving out heaping helpings of rice prasadam to the guests at the Free Sunday Love Feast. I was feeling a little blissful.

There was always a long line for the soul-satisfying Free Sunday Love Feast preparations of Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira. I would know, having been one of those standing on that same line just a week or so prior. But don't take my word for it.

Here is an excerpt from The Hare Krishna Gourmet Guide of Vegetarian Cooking by Adiraja dasa, 1984:

*"Khati mithi sabji (Sweet and sour vegetables) – Visnu Gada is a devotee well-known for his devotional cooking. While he was chief cook of the New York temple, he cooked a sumptuous feast for over three hundred people every Sunday for eight years. This dish was often the highlight of those feasts."*

As I stood there doling out spoonfuls of Krishna's mercy I recognized the faces of my friends who brought me to the temple for the first time and some of my other friends from my neighborhood in Queens who had been coming to the temple for a very long time. They had even visited the Henry Street temple in Brooklyn.

You can not imagine the look of surprise on all their faces. At first they did not even recognize me. I wouldn't have recognized me either. I was a long-haired hippy type in jeans and t-shirt only a few short days ago and now I was a shaved-head happy type in dhoti and kurta.

As each of my acquaintances reached the front of the line and were standing directly in front of me their facial expressions changed. Their eyes grew wide and their conversations stopped mid-sentence as it dawned on them exactly who was standing before them with a big serving spoon in hand waiting to serve them. Shocked is not the word. Big smiles and "Hare Krishnas" all around. We were all feeling a little more blissful.

As I have said, in the Bhakta Program, we learned to always remember Krishna and never forget Him. I want to apply the same standard to all those devotees that have blessed me with their association. Always remember and never forget them and what they did for me. They did it out of their love for, and their desire to serve, Srila Prabhupada and Krishna. This fallen conditioned soul will forever be in their debt.

*vancha-kalpatarubhyas ca krpa-sindhubhya eva ca*

*patitanam pavanebhyo vaisnavebhyo namo namah*

*"I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaisnava devotees of the Lord, who can fulfill the desires of everyone, just like desire trees, and who are full of compassion for the fallen souls."*

Those of us in the Bhakta Program were watched over and guided, somewhat like a mother hen, by his grace Damodara dasa prabhu. His grace Adhoksaja dasa prabhu left the Bhakta Program shortly after I moved in and took up another service, and so Damodara alone was personally instructing us in all of our daily activities. He was with us in kirtana, harinama, japa, class, honoring prasadam and every activity we participated in as a group.

He was intelligent, knowledgeable and serious about his service and at the same time he was easy-going and friendly, with a good sense of humor. He was respectful to all of us regardless of our ignorant offenses and although he was our direct authority figure and teacher in ISKCON, he never let it go to his head. He answered all of our never-ending and sometimes just plain

dumb inquiries concerning devotional life. He treated us all equally and I can't recall him at anytime ever being frustrated or losing his temper or disrespecting any of us in any way.

I recall one particular feast day. All of us in the Bhakta Program were seated together in a small circle in a room with Damodara prabhu and honoring the wonderful preparations of Sri Sri Radha Govinda prasadam. It was all there on our paper plates – rice, two subjis, dahl, halava, nectar and sweets.

A feast is not a true feast without sweet rice (ksira). All feasts at 340 West 55th Street in those days were true feasts and this particular feast was no exception. Every one of us "honored" multiple cups of sweet rice. It was more like "guzzled". And then we honored more cups.

And then the giggling began. At first it was just a short laugh here and there from one or another of us. Soon we were all beginning to giggle and laugh at anything.

We were getting intoxicated!

Damodara prabhu was giggling more than any of us and after a while he couldn't stop. All of our eyes were watering from all of the non-stop spiritual fun and laughter. Damodara then stood up, still giggling uncontrollably, and left the room to regain his composure. After he was out the door the whole scene of him losing control for a moment and quickly stepping out the door caused the rest of us to start a fresh gaggle of unrestrained laughter.

Everyday we were treated to the maha sweets offered to Sri Sri Radha Govinda. In the mornings, after Mangala-arati, and during japa when everyone was chanting HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE, the Bhakta Program devotees could leave the temple room and return to the sixth floor for some maha prasadam. Burfi, pera, and shrikhand were my personal favorites. The sweetest part of the maha sweets were the Tulasi leaves that were placed on top of them when they were offered. I would always save those for last.

Some of us would take advantage by acting depressed or grumpy or expressing a desire to not chant japa in order to gain the sympathy of

Damodara or Niranjana and receive extra portions of the maha sweets. (I'm in maya, prabhu! Is there anymore burfi?) Bhakta Mitch, who was initiated by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami and received the spiritual name Muchakunda dasa, was very expert at acquiring multiple pieces of burfi and pera.



#### BHAKTA MITCH

I developed a mild addiction to shrikhand. After graduating from the Bhakta Program one of the services I acquired was the transfer of the maha sweets from the Lord's plates into serving containers and plates for the Bhakta Program. What I would do was transfer the prasadam and carefully wash and dry the Lord's plates. Once that was done I would pour some of the delicious shrikhand into a paper cup and hide it somewhere in the transfer area. Once Damodara prabhu arrived I would give him the transferred prasadam and he would take it upstairs. When the coast was clear I would abscond with the ill-gotten transcendental goods.

After a while it must have become apparent that the amount of shrikhand being brought up to the Bhakta Program was diminishing day by day. One morning after completing my rascal style of transferring and was replacing the Lord's plates in cabinets, Damodara prabhu arrived a little bit earlier than usual. He explained to me that lately, somehow or other, there wasn't enough shrikhand to distribute to the bhaktas. He asked me if anyone was taking any while I was there and of course I, the rascal, replied in the negative. He then began searching under tables and in cabinets to see if he could find any of the missing shrikhand. In a manner of minutes he found my paper cup of shrikhand. I am sure my face was turning all sorts of

shades of red in embarrassment and shame but he didn't say anything to me. He simply took the cup and placed it with the rest of the transferred maha and left.

All that day I was in anxiety about being caught committing such an offense. That is just one indication of my true character. I was not in anxiety while committing those offenses or about committing the offenses. My anxiety was about being caught. This is an example of my ignorance. I actually thought that because no one saw me I was free. Krsna is in my heart so He saw what I was doing. The sun and the moon planets saw what I was doing. So I was caught from the moment I began my nonsense. I was just too ignorant and lusty to realize it. This is also an example of how the tongue is voracious and difficult to control. I lost track of the concept of pleasing the Vaisnavas and instead was only concerned with pleasing my tongue.

The next morning, when I went down to transfer the maha, I found Damodara prabhu already there performing the service. I was effectively relieved of that service and of anymore shrikhand.

To this day I have not had any more shrikhand. I could prepare it myself and offer it to Srila Prabhupada and Krishna but I never have. I have also lived in the Hartford temple, the Lake Huntington temple, the Puerto Rico temple and was a regular visitor to the Miami Beach temple, and in all that time I never even had the opportunity to honor that particular sweet. That is more than 40 years now without my favorite maha sweet.

After becoming acclimated to the daily schedule of activities and becoming somewhat steady in following that schedule we were expected to do some type of service in the temple. Most of us went to the temple basement to serve in Srimati Radharani's kitchen.

Washing pots and pans for hours on end might not sound very enticing but it was my favorite service. I enjoyed scrubbing and scouring the giant pots used for cooking and the large serving containers. The kitchen was always busy with so many devotees cooking and cleaning.

Visnu Gada dasa prabhu was in charge of the kitchen and the main cook. He was always cool, calm and collected while overseeing the multitude of devotional services being performed in love and devotion to Srila Prabhupada and Krishna in the kitchen. He would be in the midst of

preparing two or three different foodstuffs himself and at the same time he would be giving directions to a number of other devotees also preparing different offerings.

There were more than 100 devotees residing in the temple and when the traveling parties returned and if there was a big festival like Ratha Yatra or Janmastami, there could be as many as 300 or more devotees in attendance. Every Sunday there was the Free Sunday Love Feast to prepare and serve for hundreds of residents and guests. Every day and every Sunday in particular I would head to the kitchen and scrub, scour and rinse and then scrub, scour and rinse as more pots and transfer containers piled up in front of the sink.

Our duties were not limited to just cleaning. My fellow bhaktas and I would also cut fruits and vegetables. We would transfer the preps from pots to serving containers. We would go into the walk-in refrigerator and retrieve different types of bhoga for the brahmana cooks. We were not allowed to cook until we received second initiation. Obviously none of us were even first initiates.

After I had been serving in the kitchen every day for a couple of weeks I was given a small service to perform. Visnu Gada prabhu asked me to serve a Vaisnava who resided outside of the temple. Every morning this particular devotee gentleman would come to the temple before he went to his job and Visnu Gada would give him a plate of maha-prasadam from the morning offering. I was requested to perform this service on the rare occasions when Visnu Gada was not present when the devotee arrived.

In my mind at the time I assumed every Vaisnava wore dhoti and tilaka and shaved head with sikha. We all know what may happen when we assume. So you may imagine my surprise when I dutifully transferred some maha to a paper plate and brought it to the door of the kitchen. I was expecting, in my ignorance, to see a Vaisnava in full devotional attire. Instead, in my materially contaminated imperfect vision, I saw a male Indian body dressed in suit and tie with a full head of hair and a thick moustache.

In my mind I was saying, this isn't a devotee. This is some Indian karmi. How could he be a devotee with that big moustache? Regardless of what my mind was telling me, I performed my service in a gentlemanly manner. I

performed this same service a few times after and each time my mind would object and my false-ego would flatter, but I went ahead and did what I was requested without objection or question or offense to the gentleman. Except in my mind.

When I was part of a fire sacrifice months later and received my spiritual name, that particular Indian bodied gentleman whom I had served those few times at the kitchen door received the sacred thread . Eventually he took sannyasa as Veda Vyasa Swami.

In the mornings and afternoons the devotees came together to honor prasadam. Breakfast prasadam was served after Srimad Bhagavatam class and was served in the temple room. The reason for this was the temple room was the only space in the temple that could accommodate all of the residents at one time. Lunch prasadam was served on the third floor. There were fewer devotees present in the temple during the day due to the large number of residents out on book distribution and other services which were performed outside of the temple. There were separate rooms for the men and for the women.

I recall one day honoring kichari lunch prasadam. Prasadam was served with everyone sitting on the floor in rows back to back and facing each other. The prasadam servers would go down each row pushing the serving container in front and spooning out portions onto paper plates. On this day Kapindra dasa prabhu was sitting directly across from me and the server spilled some kichari on the floor next to his plate.

Kichari is very moist and will leak through a paper plate and consequently beneath every paper plate was a slight stain of kichari on the floor. When Kapindra prabhu finished honoring his prasadam he picked up his plate and licked off all the remaining bits of prasadam. When that was done the prabhu then bent his face to the floor and licked up all the kichari that had been spilled and the kichari that had leaked through his plate. Then he offered his obeisances to Srila Prabhupada. He then threw away the paper plate, went to the sink nearby and wet a cloth rag, and cleaned up the space he had occupied on the floor.

To me that was an example of faith in the teachings he imbibed from his spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. Prasadam is

Krishna's mercy. Srila Prabhupada sacrificed his life to bring that mercy to the world. What fixed-up faithful disciple of Srila Prabhupada and servant of Krishna will intentionally waste His mercy? I could plainly see that I had a loooooooooooooong way to go to approach that level of faith in the words of the pure devotee.

In the evenings, after attending Mangala-arati, Prema-dhvani and Nrsimha prayers, Tulasi-arati, chanting sixteen rounds of japa, Srngara-arati, Guru-puja and Srimad Bhagavatam class and performing service in the temple in the morning, after going out on harinama in the afternoon and then attending Sandhya-arati and Srimad Bhagavad-gita class, the bhaktas would return to the sixth floor.

We would all sit in a group on the floor just outside of Niranjana's room and honor a prasadam meal of hot milk and either fresh popcorn or some other preparation which was light and easily digestible. While we all honored our evening meal Niranjana would read to us from Krishna Book. That was so enlivening and relishable and transcendently refreshing to hear Krishna's pastimes in the company of the Vaisnavas at the end of an eighteen hour day. His pastimes would be fresh in our consciousnesses as we took rest.

## CHAPTER 8

### KIRTANA AND HARINAMA.

Before going further I would like to remind everyone that these pastimes took place in the late seventies. Some of the devotees mentioned may be considered infamous today due to their apparent misdeeds or mistakes. We all go through trials and tribulations on the path back to home, back to Godhead. Maya is very powerful and may overtake any one of us at any time. My only purpose here is to relate events to the best of my limited abilities, as they happened, and to give credit where credit is due.

The kirtanas! The kirtanas! The kirtanas! Did I mention the kirtanas?

The kirtanas at the Hare Krishna Center on West 55th Street were world-famous. There were so many wonderful kirtana leaders – Vakresvara Pandit dasa, Visnu Gada dasa, Urjasvat dasa, Laxmi-Nrsimha dasa, Niranjana dasa, Nirantara dasa, Kavidatta dasa and Rati dasa. I am sure there were others and I apologize for not remembering everyone. The kirtana leaders were surrounded by so many expert mrdanga players - Bhaktivinoda dasa, Bhumipati dasa, Hemanga dasa, Ramachandra dasa, Nandaki dasa, Sanjaya dasa and many others.

The kirtana, for me, was always the place to be. The closer I was to the center of the kirtana, the better. I would forget about my material body and mind. I would watch the pujari worshipping the Deities. I would watch the kirtana leader chanting for the pleasure of the Deities. I would watch the mrdanga players beating the sweet drums for the pleasure of the Deities. And I, me, the soul within this ugly, misshapen, ignorant pile of bones and worse, would be transported up, up and away and out of my body. I was no longer self-conscious or shy or timid. I was uplifted by the spiritual sound vibrations reverberating all around me and right through me.

I would play karatalas or the big whompers and dance and jump and chant the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE – and it always ended too soon. Back then my body was young and there was virtually no limit to the amount of chanting and dancing my body could handle without suffering any ill effects. The more I chanted and danced for Srila Prabhupada and Sri Krishna the more I was able to chant and dance. The

bodily platform did not exist. It was the spiritual world. Only Guru and Krishna and the devotees existed.

Here's one example of how, not only myself, but the kirtana leader did not want the chanting to end. One morning the Guru-puja was being led by Nirantara dasa prabhu. You have to understand, in those days, most of the devotees in the temple went out every day to distribute books. After Guru-puja prayers were chanted for His Divine Grace, the devotees would move from in front of his vyasasana and would chant in front of the Deities. At that moment a large contingent of the devotees would leave the temple room to change into karmi clothes, for preaching purposes, before returning for Srimad-Bhagavatam class. Devotees also had to go to the kitchen and other services had to be performed in and outside of the temple.

It was strange because one moment there would be a temple room full of devotees in front of the vyasasana and then when you turned and were in front of the Deities and looked around there would only be a few dozen prabhhus and matajis left. It was like – Hey, where did everybody go? Those of us that were left were mostly new bhaktas and bhaktins.

That was all right by me. It meant I could be even closer to the center of the kirtana. On this morning, as every other morning, the kirtana was blissful, ecstatic, fired-up and whatever other word there is to describe our devotional enthusiasm. We were all feeling it.

It was then that Nirantara prabhu, our fearless kirtana leader, headed for the door on the east side of the temple room. He was our leader and we all followed him through the temple room door, through the hallway, past Trilokesvara dasa prabhu at the front desk, and right out the front door onto 55th Street.

Can you picture about twenty or thirty young Hare Krishna devotees dancing and chanting, with mrdangas and karatalas, as loudly and enthusiastically as possible in the early morning on the sidewalk of West 55th Street in Manhattan on a bright sunny morning? We were louder than the rush hour traffic speeding by on the street. Now that was fun and funny when the temple president at the time, Romapada dasa prabhu, had to come outside and drag all of us back inside. Apparently our neighbors did

not like to be disturbed so early in the day. We all kept up the chanting and dancing back past the front desk and through the hallway and into the temple room. So much fun. So much fun.

Let's go on a short tangent which also involved Nirantara and Romapada prabhus. One evening Nirantara was giving the Bhagavad-gita class in the temple room. This evening the class was only sparsely attended. Most of those in attendance were the newer recruits to the temple. There were maybe two dozen junior devotees hearing the lecture.

Srila Prabhupada brought Lord Caitanya's Sankirtana movement to the western world. Sankirtana is the congregational chanting of the holy names. The whole purpose of the Hare Krishna movement is to spread the chanting of the holy names. The temples, the Deity worship, the Free Sunday Love Feasts, the street harinamas, the books, and the sadhu sanga are all meant to increase the chanting of the holy names. It is the yuga dharma. There is no alternative than to chant the holy names in the Kali yuga. We are not qualified to perform any other yagna in this age.

That was the theme of Nirantara prabhu's lecture on Bhagavad-gita. Every point he made brought the subject back to the necessity of chanting the holy names. The lecture progressed to where every sentence spoken by the prabhu ended with all of us chanting HARE KRISHA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE. This went on and on with many repetitions of first another reason for chanting and then all of us chanting. It was fun. It was enlivening. It was why we were all brought together by Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Radha Govinda in the temple room.

Suddenly the temple president Romapada burst through the doors on the north side of the temple room and made Nirantara and the devotees in attendance stop chanting.

Stopping the kirtana outdoors in the early morning hours was understandable. Why stop the chanting in the temple room? As I said we were all enjoying this class. We were all actively engaged in hearing and chanting and remembering. We were being purified by the transcendental sound vibrations. We were all knowledgably acquiring a taste for and a

desire to increase our chanting. We were in Sri Sri Radha Govinda's temple room for Krishna's sake!

Why did Romapada throw a wet blanket on our youthful enthusiasm for chanting the Hare Krishna maha mantra? Who were we disturbing?

Some kirtanas were especially intense, like the Appearance day of Lord Nrsimhadeva in 1979. Vakresvara Pandit dasa prabhu led the Mangala-arati kirtana that morning. Brahmananda swami was visiting the temple and was in attendance during the morning program. All the devotees were sitting and chanting the Sri-Nrsimha-Pranama and the Prayer to Lord Nrsimha led by Vakresvara Pandit. Brahmananda Swami was seated in front of him. I was seated directly across from them on the north side of the temple room in front of Lord Jagannatha, Lord Baladeva and Lady Subhadra.

Brahmananda maharaja was holding his danda in his left hand and with his right hand he grabbed Vakresvara Pandit by the collar of his kurta. All in one quick motion Maharaja stood up and lifted Vakresvara Pandit up off the temple room floor and onto his feet. Anyone who is familiar with Vakresvara Pandit prabhu knows that he had a very well developed muscular body. He was no featherweight. Brahmananda swami effortlessly picked him up and I could see the look of surprise on Vakresvara's face as he was pulled up into a standing position. Everyone else then got to their feet and the kirtana increased in devotional fervor and all the devotees, following the example of Brahmananda swami, were jumping up and down and chanting and dancing in ecstasy for Lord Nrsimhadeva, the half-man half-lion incarnation of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Then there was the Gaura Purnima kirtanas of the same year. Mangala-arati kirtana was led by Vakresvara Pandit dasa prabhu and Guru-puja was led by Urjasvat dasa prabhu, Vakresvara Pandita dasa prabhu and Laxmi-Nrsimha dasa prabhu, in that order. Any words that I can think of will fall short of properly describing the devotional intensity and ecstasy of that morning.

I can tell you that I was there. I had no right to be there. I was just a lowly uninitiated bhakta in a large gathering of Srila Prabhupada's direct disciples. If that isn't causeless mercy I don't know what is. I was as close to the center of the chanting and dancing as I could get. Standing right next to the

kirtana leader is as close as you can be and that is exactly where I was. I have my own personal audio recording of that morning and have listened to it many times over the years. The spiritual sound vibrations always enliven me and I still find it hard to believe that I was actually there.

During kirtanas, on the southwest side of the temple room, in front of the Deities of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda, were most of the brahmacharis. The kirtana leader was also on that side situated near the front and next to the center aisle and facing the central Deities of worship of the temple, Sri Sri Radha Govinda. On the northwest side, in front of the Deities of Lord Jagannatha, Lord Baladeva and Lady Subhadra, were the balance of the brahmacharis. Situated behind them on that side were the Vaisnavis.

In the center of the temple room there was a clear aisle, extending in width from one side of Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana to the other side and in length from the vyasasana to the main altar, uninhabited by any devotees. In other words there was a clear and unobstructed path between Srila Prabhupada and Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Govinda.

I did not know at the time if that was the case before 1978. All I knew at the time is that was the way it was at that time in the New York temple.

(Concerning the position of the matajis stuck way in the back behind the men, I now know after reading numerous memoirs of devotees of the days during Srila Prabhupada's vapuh that the Vaisnavis were not relegated to the rear. They were side by side with their god-brothers.)

Devotees didn't dance around in a circle, either individually or in a group, in the center aisle. Devotees didn't dance from one end of the center aisle in front of the Deities to Srila Prabhupada and back. It was not because there was not enough room. There was room enough for another hundred devotees. In my opinion it was out of, still current at the time among all the devotees, proper Vaisnava etiquette and respect and devotion and love for their spiritual master, Srila Prabhupada, the Founder Acharya.

Everything that we had - from our dhotis and saris to the many temples and properties to the profusion of spiritual literatures, everything we were doing - from rising early in the morning and dancing and singing HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE

RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE and distributing books and serving the Deities and honoring prasadam, everything we had become – from fools and rascals to brahmacharis and brahmacharinis to grhastas to sannyasis to Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis, everything pertaining to our current attempt at spiritual existence – was given to us by Srila Prabhupada.

One morning, during a fired-up Mangala-arati kirtana, one brahmachari, Yaduganguli dasa prabhu, stepped out of the crowd of devotees surrounding the kirtana leader and into the aisle between Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana and Sri Sri Radha Govinda. He was playing karatalas and facing the kirtana leader. Almost immediately, the GBC for New York, Adi Kesava swami came out of the crowd of devotees and forcefully shoved Yaduganguli dasa back into the group of devotees on the south side. Yaduganguli was momentarily surprised but the prabhu quickly recovered his poise and just smiled and continued dancing and chanting the holy names.

After the kirtana Adi Kesava took the microphone and explained his actions. He said that one time there was a very ecstatic kirtana taking place in the temple room. Srila Prabhupada was seated on the vyasasana and the devotees started to dance in a circle in front of the Deities and blocked his view. After a few moments Srila Prabhupada's transcendental voice, like a clap of thunder, boomed over the loud speakers:

"MOVE OUT OF THE WAY!"

Adi Kesava then spoke about how it had only been a very short time since the end of Srila Prabhupada's physical manifestation here on Earth (only months) and how so many things were already changing. How much would the Krishna consciousness movement change if we continued in this way and what would the society Prabhupada founded look like ten years from now?

Six days a week, Monday through Saturday, the devotees in the Bhakta Program went out on harinama. On weekdays we would go out after lunch prasadam. On Saturdays we would go out in the late afternoon or early evening.

The harinama party on weekdays was comprised mostly of the new bhaktas and bhaktins. We would be led by one of the experienced kirtana leaders

like Visnu Gada dasa, Nirantara dasa, Urjasvat dasa and Niranjana dasa. Some days there would only be about a dozen or so of us and other days there would be three times as much. It depended on who was not already engaged in service in or outside of the temple on a particular day.

On weekdays his grace Sanat Kumara dasa prabhu would always be dancing in front of the harinama party and handing out prasadam to the public. Sometimes it was small paper bags of popcorn prasadam and other times it would be Simply Wonderfals or another type of sweet.

Saturday was a much larger harinama party. Fifty, sixty, seventy or more devotees would go out with mrdangas and karatalas and head over to Times Square to inundate the public with the holy names of Hare, Krishna and Rama. We would head east on 55th Street to 7th Avenue and then go downtown. The chanting party would stop on different corners and stay there for five or ten minutes of kirtana followed by another few minutes of preaching by the leader of the party before moving on. There would also be one or two devotees that would distribute small books and Back to Godhead magazines. We would go all the way to 42nd Street and then return to the temple. Of course we were chanting all the way.

Wherever we went we were the main attraction. Sometimes we would get some negative responses from individuals. Some would call us the devil or say that we were going to hell. Some would spit at us. Some would even cover their ears in a vain attempt to block out the spiritual sound vibrations. They were in the minority. Generally people would stop and look and listen. Some would clap their hands along with the beat. Some would chant and dance. Most Saturday nights, one or two people that we met along the way would be attracted enough by the public chanting of the maha mantra that they would follow us back to the temple. Some stayed overnight. Some even moved in for good. Such is the potency of Krishna's holy names.

Each and every one of the devotees would return to the temple blissfully satisfied after performing harinama sankirtana. We were all following in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, who inaugurated the sankirtana movement centuries ago.

And who gave us this nectarean pastime to perform?

His Divine Grace Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the Founder Acharya of the original authentic International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

Where would we be without his mercy?

## CHAPTER 9

### SANKIRTANA.

I was in the sankirtana devotee quarters one morning when Yadu Ganguli prabhu returned from book distribution barely one hour after he left. He had picked a thousand dollars from one person almost as soon as he arrived at Grand Central Station. He was almost floating on air and his face was effulgent as he revealed to the few devotees present how he collected such a large sum in such a short time.

He explained that he was preaching to a person foreign to the United States and unfamiliar with the value of U.S. currency. He convinced him to take one of Srila Prabhupada's books and give a donation. Once the person took out his wallet and the amount of money it contained was revealed, the prabhu engaged in what was known in those days as the "change-up".

The "change-up" was one example of the "by hook or by crook" philosophy prevalent to some degree among the devotees. The justification used by some was that it was okay to cheat an unwitting "karmi" because it wasn't really "stealing". The money belongs to Krishna. Everything belongs to Him. Everything is a product of the energy of Krishna. The sankirtana devotees were just returning the money to its rightful owner. They would use it in Krishna's service and therefore the "karmi" and the devotee would both ultimately gain eternal spiritual benefit.

No thought or very little thought was given to the negative feelings of the "karmis" when they realized that they had been bamboozled, or the possible damage to the reputation of Srila Prabhupada as the Founder Acharya if his followers gained a reputation as thieves and con-artists. What to speak of what the person thought of Srila Prabhupada's book after apparently being swindled.

The "change-up" was used to confuse and confound and get away quickly before the victim realizes what has happened. Whether it was a Krishna conscious style of preaching or not I will leave to the advanced devotees to consider. Karma, the infallible justice, has the final say.

As for myself, I was a terrible preacher and book distributor, and I never approached the expertise necessary, nor did I have the desire to attain such

"expertise", and therefore was incapable of pulling off the "change-up". I learned about it from the sankirtana devotees who were expert at it.

After a few weeks in the Bhakta Program I was sent out with two other devotees in a shopping mall parking lot to learn how to do the "pick". Nama Sankirtana dasa prabhu, Bhakta Steve prabhu and I traveled in a temple car to a lot in one of the outer boroughs. Nama Sankirtana was in charge and he explained to me how to approach people and extract laxmi from them. I was not given any books or BTGs to distribute. I was supplied with a small pack of incense sticks and tasked with distributing them one by one and collecting laxmi for them. I was told to approach anyone and everyone without discrimination and to remember to meditate on Guru and Gauranga and always chant the holy names to my self – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE – while engaged in approaching the "karmis".

I did as I was told and approached everyone I saw but I was not successful in collecting laxmi. I was an almost total failure. Towards the end of the evening, as the sun was setting and it was getting dark, I approached a lady as she was walking towards her car. I held up a stick of incense and was about ten feet away from her and said hello. Before I could utter another sound she started screaming at me to get away from her. Apparently she either mistook the stick of incense for a weapon or the ugliness of my material body approaching her in the dark scared her and she was afraid I was going to mug her, or worse. I stepped back and apologized and left the area.

That pretty much summed up the overall reception I received all that day. My clumsiness with social interactions, my introverted personality and my inexperience in collecting in combination with my mean ugly face and tall gawky body and my lack of desire to fulfill the order of Guru and Krishna all added up to a miserable day and night. I collected almost nothing and to top it off, now I was frightening people and causing them to scream for help.

At the day's conclusion we returned to our vehicle to add up the results of the day. I sat in the back seat and Nama Sankirtana and Bhakta Steve sat in front. They both collected a substantial amount of laxmi and distributed their fair share of transcendental literatures and incense. When I was asked

to reveal my total I was embarrassed to announce my pitiful collection of less than five dollars.

Immediately Bhakta Steve started laughing out loud at me and my poor results. I was already feeling down in the dumps, but his raucous outburst of unrestrained merriment at my miniscule amount of laxmi collected made me feel so low that I would have had to stand on my tip toes on top of a ladder and reach up and stretch my body as far as possible in order to almost reach bottom. I was already depressed. Now I was shocked at such a callous reaction, but I took it as Krishna's mercy on me. I did not say a word.

I didn't have to. After a number of loud guffaws at my expense Nama Sankirtana prabhu injected some much needed Krishna consciousness into the situation. Nama was the leader of our little sankirtana party and assuredly the most experienced and mature devotee among us. He preached to us about detachment from the results of our activities and the necessity of proper Vaisnava behavior to make advancement in Krishna consciousness. Bhakta Steve apologized and we returned back to home, back to 340 West 55th Street.

Bhakta Steve became somewhat infamous a few weeks later. At that time there was a popular social commentary comic strip, "Verbatim", which appeared regularly in one of the local periodicals in New York City. The strip featured word for word dialogue and corresponding illustrations of actual real-life incidents, witnessed by the artist/author, which were claimed to be "verbatim" or portrayed exactly as they transpired.

Bhakta Steve was distributing books in the Port Authority building one day when his preaching activities were supposedly witnessed by that artist/author and became the subject of one of the "Verbatim" strips.

In a nutshell – The prabhu was dressed in suit and tie and wig as were all the male devotees that performed sankirtana in the airports and the bus and train terminals. He was preaching to someone when he literally flipped his wig. First he was extolling the spiritual benefits of accepting a book and giving a donation. But then it all went haywire. He lost control of his tongue and then lost control of his mind and finally he pulled off his wig and started yelling in the midst of the crowds of passersby –

"THE HARE KRISHNAS ARE GOING TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD!"

Generally speaking that was how he was unflatteringly portrayed in print for all of New York to read. Remember there was no internet way back then in the previous century. Print was a major source of information. That particular strip was tacked on the bulletin board outside of the temple president's office for all of the devotees to see. Needless to say, Bhakta Steve got the "sauce" from the local GBC and the TP. Eventually he was initiated by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami and given the spiritual name Sanatana Goswami dasa.

I loved to read the Sankirtana Newsletter. I would be amazed and personally enlivened by the exploits of a singular book distributor. He led in almost every category – big books, medium books, small books, and Back to Godhead magazines distributed and total amount of laxmi collected. What was so personally inspiring was the fact that the devotee leading almost everyone in the world in almost every category was an uninitiated devotee named Bhakta Monty.

He was like me – just an uninitiated bhakta and I identified with that.

But he was so unlike me. He had the courage and the fortitude and the determination to undergo the severe austerity of traveling weeks and months on end in a small van with a group of devotees to the shopping mall parking lots of the tri-state area, distributing Srila Prabhupada's books and having wonderful success. Whenever the latest Sankirtana Newsletter came out I would look for Bhakta Monty's name and wouldn't have to look far. It was always at or near the top of every category every time.

I imagined him to be this gigantic Herculean figure of a devotee – defeating with sastric evidence any and all arguments against accepting a Bhagavad-gita As It Is or a Srimad-Bhagavatam, and then collecting every dollar and cent available from the fortunate soul that received one of Srila Prabhupada's books. I couldn't wait to meet this great soul when the traveling sankirtana parties returned to Radha Govinda Mandira.

When I saw Bhakta Monty for the first time I was impressed. He wasn't ten feet tall and packed with muscles as I had imagined. No. He was slight of build, quiet, and humble. You might even say he was shy. He did not act like some of the other full-time sankirtana devotees who were somewhat spoiled and pampered by authorities. He did not act like he deserved to be

treated differently than the "temple" devotees – you know, the devotees who have the humble yet essential services of cooking, serving, cleaning, washing, sweeping, mopping, repairing and maintaining the ashrama, those selfless sadhakas who were at times looked down upon because of their humble position within the temple hierarchy. He really was just a humble guy trying his best to serve Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Radha Govinda. He was eventually initiated by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami and given the spiritual name Mahaprabhu dasa.

## PART THREE UNDER-GRADUATE STUDENT

### CHAPTER 10

#### HARTFORD TEMPLE.

It was very early in the morning, just a few days after moving into the temple, and I was waiting for my turn to use the communal shower on the sixth floor. There were about a dozen or so of us brahmacaries standing in line in our gumchas. I was at the end of the line when a few more brahmacaries joined the queue. The devotee directly in back of me said "Hare Krishna" and introduced himself. He said his name was Bhakta Dave. Bhakta Dave was eventually initiated by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami and given the spiritual name Daruka dasa. He was just returning from the Hartford temple and was looking forward to seeing me in Hartford in the near future.

Immediately I was on the mental platform. The business of the uncontrolled mind is accepting and rejecting. The uncontrolled mind is an enemy to self-realization.

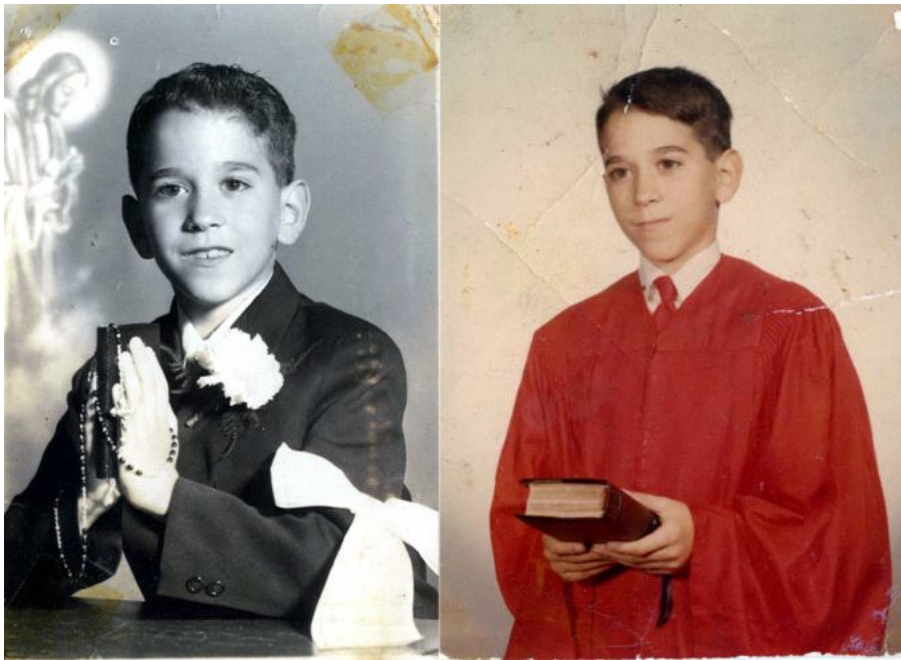
"As long as one's mind remains an unconquered enemy, one has to serve the dictations of lust, anger, avarice, illusion, etc." (Srimad Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 6, Text 6)

So right away I was thinking to myself, why would I want to go to Hartford and why is this devotee looking forward to seeing me there? Here I was living in a beautiful Manhattan skyscraper building with hundreds of devotees. I was personally experiencing a new, unique, unprecedented and exhilarating purpose and happiness. I was born and raised in New York City. I was in the heart of one of the biggest and most important cities on this planet. NYC was my home. Why would I want to leave this excellent arrangement to go to, of all places, Hartford, Connecticut?

You see what I mean by mental platform? How dare anyone disturb this wonderful new experience by suggesting that it is only a temporary arrangement! Even before I knew anything, not one fact, my mind was rejecting the idea. At that time I knew nothing of the fickle nature of the mind. I did not know what to think and the innocent remark of Bhakta Dave

prabhu caused me to experience some anxiety. I thought this was my home and now I am hearing that maybe that is not so.

I did not ask Bhakta Dave what he was doing in Hartford. I did not ask Damodar dasa prabhu or Niranjana dasa prabhu, my immediate authorities, about it either. Here I will give the reader, if there is one, some insight into my psychological-emotional-mental condition at the time.



Author as a child 1960, 1967

My childhood was an extremely impoverished one. Before I was 10 years old my family had moved at least two dozen times from one vermin infested Brooklyn hovel to another. We were usually one step ahead of a city marshal eviction because we had no money to pay the rent or utilities. One time the city marshal actually did catch up to us and threw us and our belongings out onto the street. Describing us as "poor white trash" would not be inaccurate. We were so poor that at one time we were living in what was known as a cold-water flat in the backyard of another building. It was really just a converted old shed or stable. There was a small cast iron pot-bellied stove on one side which provided the inadequate heat. The walls were always wet and damp. It was cold in winter and broiling in summer. That was in the late 1950's.

That situation is where the "poor white trash" label was most appropriate. We were living in the backyard of a building which was occupied by at least one black family. We were worse off than those who were looked down upon and discriminated against by society in general at that time, and even today. We truly were "poor white trash", being thrown out of one place after another just like trash.

My father was a Korean War veteran of the United States Marine Corps. He was wounded in action and awarded two Purple Hearts. He returned home suffering from post traumatic stress which, at the time, was not recognized as a malady and was therefore not treated. His easily recognized physical wounds were treated, but not the hidden psychological ones. Consequently he had no control over his anger. Guess who was the recipient of the majority of his anger in the form of a 6 foot 2 inch former Marine's fists and metal-buckled thick leather belt? I reveal this not to garner sympathy. I want to reveal my particular mental and emotional state. We all go through personal trials and tribulations in the material world. That is the nature of the material world. It is a place of suffering. We don't belong here.

*"From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode, O son of Kunti, never takes birth again." (Srimad Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 8, Text 16)*

Whenever I opened my mouth as a child it was met with full force blows from a fist or the hard back of the hand or many strokes of the belt to whatever available part of my material body was within reach of either of my parents. It didn't matter top or bottom, front or back. Wherever a blow could be struck it was, and if I tried to avoid or shirk from the blows I received more. In one instance, a wooden broomstick was broken over my back. Another time I was thrown to the floor and had to get stitches, without anesthesia or any type of pain killer, to close my broken chin. Additionally, from time to time, I was locked in a closet or a bathroom for hours. Remember that was the 1950's. Corporal punishment was considered a normal and accepted method of child rearing. Spare the rod and spoil the child. In Catholic school the nuns and priests never spared the rod.

I learned at a young age to shut up - that was the mantra pounded into my consciousness – shut up, shut up, shut up! I learned the lessons so well that one of my nicknames as a child was "Silent Sam" because I was forced to maintain a vow of silence (mauna vrata) and would not speak to anyone. My other nickname was "knucklehead" which derived from my silence being interpreted as ignorance. I am ignorant, so that one still applies.

Physical abuse, poverty, deprivation, homelessness – all these things were part of my karma as a child. I accepted it. I had no choice. It could have been much, much worse. Others have suffered more terribly than I ever have. I was going to write that no one ever shot at me but that wouldn't be entirely accurate. One uncle did shoot at and hit me as part of his sadistic moving target practice with an air pistol or BB gun. No one ever shot at us with real bullets or dropped bombs on us or burned our house down. Besides, Krishna was always a part of my life in one form or another, so I really didn't suffer. He always protected me and sustained me and He still does. He is my only shelter. Today I take shelter of Him in the form of His holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

*"You should understand this essential fact: life is temporary and filled with various kinds of miseries. Therefore carefully take shelter of the holy name and remain always engaged in His service as your eternal occupation." (Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur, Arunodaya-kirtana)*

I was brutally trained to not question authority. That is one point. So when I was faced with this totally innocuous Hartford comment, or if I had any question about anything, I usually kept it to myself. I had a very difficult time with revealing my mind or true feelings and it can be traced back to the earliest training I received as an innocent child.

Another point is this: an individual with that type of personality -- one who can't question authority because questioning or doubting authority would cause a mental and emotional crisis of confusion, fear and self-doubt -- is a perfect victim for a dishonest, underhanded, unscrupulous, charismatic, villainous person.

That brief conversation with Bhakta Dave left my consciousness until a month or so later, when one of the original eleven "zonal acharyas" gave a

Srimad-Bhagavatam class and got Niranjana prabhu all fired up to go out and preach. He called me into his office after breakfast prasadam and informed me that I was being sent to the preaching center in Hartford. My heart sank and my mind exploded but I remained silent and accepted the decision of my bhakta leader.

Krta Krt dasa prabhu, visiting 340 West 55th Street, was the temple president in Hartford. I gathered my dhotis and kurtas and few possessions and put them into a temple vehicle and Krta Krt prabhu drove us to the preaching center. While we were driving through the crowded streets of Manhattan he was explaining to me that all the living entities were like moving pieces on a chessboard and Krishna was the chess master. We were just pawns to be utilized in His service. It didn't matter to me what he was saying. I wasn't listening. I felt as if I was being thrown out again just like the trash.

After a few hours we arrived at a small two story house in a quiet residential area. My mind was complaining to me: "Are you kidding! You went from that big beautiful building in New York City with all those nice devotees to this little house in the middle of No Where Ville! Ugh!" My mind got even more agitated once we went inside. "Where are the deities? Are you joking? You were chanting and dancing in front of such grand Deities in Manhattan, and all I see here is a small painting of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His Associates on top of a small wooden table in a small living room! What is wrong with you?" It just kept getting worse. "Where are all the devotees? You can count all of them on the fingers of your two hands and still have fingers left over! I completely reject this! Get me out of here!"

So you can see I was not being Krishna conscious at all. I went through the motions of devotional service but my heart was not in it. You could say I was spoiled by my short stay at Radha Govinda Mandira. You could say I was a complete nonsense for rejecting the order of the representative of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. You could say that I was not surrendered. You could say I was an offender to the holy names. I accept all those criticisms as just and true. They are just as true today. I am not being humble. I am an offensive nonsense rascal who is going to hell. I accept that. At least it won't be a long trip to hell. The planet of Yamaraja is not far from this one.

*"There are many living entities who give punishment to the miscreants, and among them Yama is the chief. Yama is situated in a planet near this earthly planet, and after death those who are very sinful are taken there, and Yama arranges different kinds of punishments for them." (Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 10, Text 29 purport)*

My only saving grace, thanks to the knowledge imbibed from the original unchanged books of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, is that I truly believe that I belong to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, and I still chant His holy names.

I performed terribly on sankirtana. My best day collecting was \$50. That was the one and only day that I ignored my mind and false ego and approached every single person that crossed my path. At the end of the day I even forced the temple van, filled with the rest of the sankirtana devotees, to wait for me while I collected a donation of coins literally thrown at me by one man who I would not leave alone until he gave something. Of course I became puffed up thinking I was responsible for collecting that laxmi even though it was such an insignificant amount. It had nothing to do with Srila Prabhupada's or Lord Caitanya's mercy. It was all my potency. At least that was what my mind and false ego told me after being ignored all day.

The following days I collected practically nothing.

When will I ever learn?

One fond and humorous memory of that first time in Hartford (I was sent there a second time after I received my spiritual name and did even worse) was while associating with Bhakta Raoul prabhu. He was funny and humble and everyone knew when he was taking a shower. The shower was upstairs. Everyone downstairs in the house could hear him shouting HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE as loud as he could while he was underneath the ice cold water. I can still hear him.

Eventually I was returned to 340 West 55th Street temple because I did not want to go out to the parking lots anymore. I just wanted to go home. So you see – Krishna fulfills everyone's desire, in proportion to one's qualifications, even the desires of a spoiled nonsense devotee pretender.

*"Such a person must factually know the greatest of all, [Sri Krishna] who is unembodied, omniscient, beyond reproach, without veins, pure, and uncontaminated, the self-sufficient philosopher who has been fulfilling everyone's desire since time immemorial." (Sri Isopanisad, Mantra 8)*

When I returned to the Hare Krishna Center in Manhattan I was given a choice as to what type of service I would perform. I recognized the fact that preaching and book distribution were the most appreciated services within the temple so I wanted to serve the sankirtana devotees. I was given the service of sankirtana support.

## CHAPTER 11

### SANKIRTANA SUPPORT AND KITCHEN SERVICE.

I was home again. I wanted to jump up and down and offer obeisances again and again to every devotee in the temple. I felt ashamed that I was unable to succeed in the field of transcendental book distribution, but that shame was mitigated by the bliss I felt in the association of the multitude of Vaisnavas who welcomed me back. I was just so happy to be back where I felt in my heart I belonged – the Hare Krishna Center at 340 West 55th Street in Manhattan.

JAYA – RADHA – GOVINDA – RADHA – GOVINDA – RADHE!

I was no longer part of the bhakta program. I guess I graduated when I was sent to Hartford. I was given a room on the fifth floor – room 512. I still have my laundry bag with the number 512 stenciled on it. I brought my dhotis and kurtas and the rest of my belongings and made myself at home. I had no roommate at first so I had the space all to my lonesome.

As previously mentioned, I volunteered for sankirtana support service. My good friend and former bhakta program associate, bhakta Al, was already serving full-time in the temple restaurant. I was previously advised by my bhakta leaders to avoid the restaurant. I wasn't given any precise reasons but it was intimated that associating with some of the devotees and guests that frequented the spiritual eatery would not be good for my Krishna consciousness. I followed their advice with the exception of visiting on occasion with bhakta Al in the early morning, while he was setting up the restaurant paraphernalia. I didn't see how associating with the very same friend and god-brother, that I had shared so many happy Krishna conscious pastimes with for so many weeks, could be bad for my sadhana. I never visited the restaurant while it was open for business.

My main service was in the book room. The book room was located on the second floor on the southeast side of the temple. Here is how the second floor was set up. When you stepped off of the elevator and went south, or to the right, you would arrive at the office of the sankirtana leader, Muralivadaka dasa. Rupa Sanatana dasa and bhakta Tony, who eventually was initiated by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami and received the spiritual name Abhimanyu dasa, were his assistants and performed a wide-ranging

assortment of devotional services. There the sankirtana devotees would hold meetings and on special occasions they would honor prasadam feasts. If you went north from the elevator, or to the left, you would arrive at the office of the GBC, Adi Kesava Swami, and his secretary, Tattvavit dasa. Tattvavita dasa was very kind and merciful to me. He gave me many audio tapes of Vaisnava bhajans and kirtans and lectures.

Then you head west from the GBC office and down the long hallway. First was the office of the temple president, Laxmi-Nrsimha dasa, who had recently replaced Romapada dasa in that service. Next was the office of Tosana Krsna dasa who had the title of communications director or something similar. Then there was the comptroller and accounting office of Gadadhara Pandita dasa and Karnipura dasa. We have reached the end of that hallway and now turn left, or south, where Sri Rama dasa had his luxurious office. At the end of the hall was the office of Romapada dasa, now the Regional Secretary. Turn left again, or east, and we finally arrive at the book room. Next in line was the office of Vakresvara Pandita dasa, the temple vice president. A little bit further, in a small nook in a corner, Caturvyuha dasa toiled all day long with a sewing machine, producing the beautiful outfits of the Deities. There was a short hallway behind the elevators and stairway, linking the north and south sides, where the counting room was located. There the sankirtana devotees would deposit the laxmi collected daily and Lila-Purusottama dasa performed the service of tallying the proceeds.

The book room was just that – a room full of books. Not mundane books but transcendental literatures of the highest pedigree. There were boxes and boxes of Srila Prabhupada's original, unchanged Bhagavad-gita As It Is, hard cover and soft cover, with Sanskrit and without. There were all of his original, unchanged small and medium books, some but not all of the Srimad-Bhagavatam, mostly first and second canto, also original and unchanged, and the latest editions of the Back to Godhead magazine. There was a small desk where I sat and served the sankirtana devotees as they arrived. I would distribute the floats (small bills) and whatever books were requested. On occasion I would go to the Port Authority Bus Terminal or to Grand Central Station to deliver a box of books to the devotees to restock their exhausted supply. There would be a regular delivery every month from the BBT and I would unload the many boxes and bring Srila

Prabhupada's books upstairs. When the traveling sankirtana parties returned they would drop off whatever books they had that were damaged in the field, those would go the surrender box, and I would assist them in replenishing their stock of books and BTG's.

I would also do service in the kitchen. I always enjoyed washing the pots and pans and cutting up the fruits and vegetables. I was even trained to do some cooking. After I received my spiritual name I cooked some carob halava, which was part of a feast for the sankirtana devotees. Visnu Gada dasa prabhu oversaw the preparation every step of the way.

I was happy again. I had the association of a hundred or more devotees. I was back on a regulated schedule of resting early and rising early and chanting japa and chanting and dancing in front of Sri Sri Radha Govinda, Sri Sri Gaura Nitai and Their Lordships Jagannatha, Baladeva and Lady Subhadra. Did I mention that I was chanting HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE? Sorry. It must have slipped my mind.

I was happy. Even writing about it so many years later, the memory, the still alive in my consciousness memory of that time, makes me happy. Alas, I should have known better, I read the verse in the Gita so many times, don't get too happy. Always try to maintain your equilibrium in all circumstances.

*"O son of Kunti, the nonpermanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, O scion of Bharata, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed." (Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 2, Text 14)*

Maybe I was too happy and I let it show. Once again, someone in authority had their own plan, and I was just a pawn on their chessboard. Pawns are always the first to be sacrificed. My advancement and my happiness in Krishna consciousness didn't seem to make a difference. Let me get this out of the way here. Then I will return to relate some of the experiences I had while serving in the book room.

One day, seemingly out of the blue, not the blackish blue of the rain cloud, Romapada dasa approached me. He requested that I give up my service and let his god-brother, Darpaha dasa, take my place. Just like that. No

preliminaries. No warning sign. No advance notice. No reason or explanation except the devotee used to do my service in the past.

I knew the devotee that wanted my service. I knew he was ill. He was suffering with jaundice. He was just getting over it. He lived in the room across from mine and I had some association with him. I knew that he was not maintaining his sadhana due to his illness. Why would Romapada want him to replace me?

I was crestfallen. I should have spoken up for myself. I should have said that I am happy in this service and I don't want to give it up. I wish I could go back and tell my younger self to stand up like a man and say what was on my mind and in my heart. There is no going back. I have to learn from the past or be condemned to repeat it.

I acquiesced like a sheep to the request of Romapada dasa and so began a quick downward spiral until, during my second non-voluntary stay in Hartford; I sat on a bench in a shopping mall parking lot for an entire day and read the current Back to Godhead magazine from cover to cover instead of distributing books. I walked the 20 or so miles back to the preaching center, on the side of a highway in the dark of night, and took rest in the backseat of one of the temple cars. I was sent back to NYC after that incident and shortly thereafter, due to loss of faith and depression, I blooped and returned to my old neighborhood for two weeks. That was a disaster. Once you experience a higher taste, there is no going back to the mundane. I will speak more about those days later on.

He could have asked me to serve with his god-brother. We could have assisted each other and both of us could have been happy and made progress in our spiritual lives. He didn't have to completely remove me from what was a fitting service for me.

Let's move on. I remember two significant Bhaktivedanta Book Trust truck deliveries.

One time I was standing in the front doorway after the BBT truck had pulled up in front of the temple. There were no books to unload. The trailer was vacant except for an elderly devotee. He was short with a protruding belly and he was using a cane as he walked around inside of the trailer. At first I thought that he had traveled in the trailer but that couldn't be. Why would

anyone ride in the back of a trailer truck? He began to climb down from the rear of the empty trailer. I took my eyes off him until I heard a sound like someone had dropped a big heavy bag of garbage out of a window and it went "whap!" as it hit the sidewalk. I looked back and the elderly devotee was laying flat on his face in the street. He gradually picked himself up with the help of his cane, dusted himself off, and slowly limped to the temple doors. I did not know him and he did not know me. I said "Hari bol, are you ok?" He said "Hare Krishna" and he went inside and boarded the elevator.

The next morning he was giving the Srimad-Bhagavatam class. I learned then that it was Kirtanananda Swami, one of the "zonal acaryas".

Another day the BBT truck arrived with a delivery of Srila Prabhupada's books. This time the driver brought a helper with him. This person had to be one of the most raggedy persons I had ever seen. I have spent most of my life in New York City and I have seen every type of vagrant. This prabhu had long greasy stringy hair hanging halfway down his back. He was dirty and smelled a little past ripe. His clothes could not be described as clothes. There were more holes in his t-shirt and jeans than there were t-shirt and jeans. That was all just a disguise to hide his already advanced Krishna consciousness from envious fools like me. He brought all the books up to the second floor by himself, for which I was grateful.

He stayed. He moved into the temple. He made very quick advancement in the practice of sadhana bhakti. His spiritual name is Rama Raya dasa.

Here are two very short stories from the annual Christmas marathon. As everyone knows, the weeks leading up to December 25th are spent in a marathon of book distribution. Devotees also dress up as Santa Claus and hit the streets and subways in NYC to collect funds.

The Santa Claus participants would go to one room to be fitted with a proper size costume and to have their faces painted with rosy cheeks and to have bushy white eyebrows and beard applied. Then they would come to the book room to acquire some small books and BTG's and a small float to put in their collection bucket or basket for seed money.

During the winter of 1978 Sadaputa dasa prabhu, the devotee scientist, was visiting the Hare Krishna Center in Manhattan. He gave a scientifically based Srimad-Bhagavatam class which went right over my head. I did not expect

him to dress up as Santa but there I was, sitting at my desk on Christmas Eve morning, and in walks Sadaputa Claus. He was very humble and soft spoken. He was preaching by example. If he could dress up and go out to collect, even though he was just visiting, then what excuse was there for a full-time resident to not do the same?

On Christmas morning there was the usual ecstatic Mangala-arati kirtana. In the midst of the chanting and dancing, in walks Bindu Madhava dasa prabhu still dressed in his Santa suit. He had spent the evening and night and early morning at Studio 54, the former popular party destination frequented by the faux-celebrities of those times. I don't know what he did there. You will have to ask him yourself. It was just a comical situation to have Santa Claus at mangala arati. Santa Claus worshipped Srila Prabhupada, Sri Sri Radha Govinda and chanted the holy names of Hare, Krishna and Rama, not to mention Nitai Gauranga.

And finally here are three tales of time spent in the association of the big time male book distributors of 340 West 55th Street in 1978 and 1979. I am referring to the following: Sanjaya dasa, Kavidatta dasa, Yaduganguli dasa, and Jada Bharata dasa to mention a few. They were the devotees that dressed up in suit, tie and wig and distributed Srila Prabhupada's books in the airports and bus and train terminals of NYC. They all lived in one room on the northeast end of the fifth floor, except for Sanjaya dasa, who shared a room with Visnu Gada dasa right next door. Then there were the second tier book distributors who sometimes traveled and sometimes worked the airports and bus and train terminals. They were Nama-sankirtana dasa, Mahaprabhu dasa, Vyasapada dasa, Kesihā dasa, Srila dasa and many others.

I mean no disrespect to all the prabhu matajis that were also engaged in distributing Srila Prabhupada's books and were just as expert and some even more so than the men. I was a brahmachari and only associated with the brahmacharis so I have no knowledge of their pastimes on sankirtana.

New York was part of the "zone" of Satsvarupa dasa Goswami. When he visited he would sometimes go for a japa walk, weather permitting, with the sankirtana devotees. On this particular morning, most of those devotees went on a japa walk with SDG in Riverside Park. I was allowed to tag along. I was walking directly behind SDG and a sankirtana devotee was

beside me to my left. SDG was wearing sandals. The prabhu intentionally stepped on the back of one of SDG's sandals and it came off his foot. I say intentionally because I was getting concerned when I saw him purposely looking at and moving his footsteps closer and closer to the back of SDG's feet until he accomplished the deed.

SDG and the group of devotees stopped and turned as the prabhu picked up his sandal and returned it to him. That was what he really wanted – to touch the dust of the "lotus feet" of his spiritual master. It didn't matter the offensive manner, by hook or by crook, by which he accomplished his self-centered goal. The rascal prabhu had this half-smile half-smirk on his face as SDG chastised him and told him not to walk so close.

I was thinking "What a rascal!" At the time I worshipped SDG. He was supposed to be a pure devotee. He was taking me back home, back to Godhead. The rascal prabhu was his disciple too. How could you do that to your guru? What about the offense to a pure devotee? What if he tripped and fell and injured himself or someone else? I thought it was reckless, selfish and disrespectful and also possibly indicative of an immature understanding or, even worse, a mundane conception of the guru disciple relationship in Krishna consciousness. As the saying goes "It takes one (rascal) to know one."

Then there was the trip to Jones Beach with a visiting sannyasi from South America, Pancadravida swami. Once again I was allowed to tag along with a group of sankirtana devotees. We all piled into a temple van on a hot summer morning and headed out of the city.

We stopped at a gas station on the way to refuel the vehicle. We sat there with the rear doors open to let in some fresh air. While we sat there a young lady approached us carrying an injured little dog in her arms. She said that her dog was just hit by a car and could we please drive her to a nearby hospital. Everyone sat there for a moment in uncomfortable silence.

I was thinking "Oh well, there goes the trip to the beach. We have to help this poor little dog." One of the senior sankirtana devotees spoke up. "We are religious monks. It's against our religion to have a dog in our vehicle. We are sorry but we cannot help you." And the door was unceremoniously shut in her face.

Wait a minute. What about that Bhagavad-gita verse about the humble sage?

*vidya-vinaya-sampanne bhahmane gavi hastini*

*sunī caiva svapake ca paṇḍitah sama-darsinah*

TRANSLATION

*The humble sage, by virtue of true knowledge, sees with equal vision a learned and gentle brahmana, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater [outcaste].*

PURPORT excerpt

*A Krishna conscious person does not make any distinction between species or castes... (Srimad Bhagavad-gita, As It Is, Chapter 5, Text 18)*

Nowhere in the full purport does it say "Unless it may interfere with the humble sage taking a trip to the beach on a hot summer day. Then the humble sage may make a distinction."

Then there is the pastime of the stray dog that followed Sivananda Sena and took darshan of Lord Gauranga and gained liberation.

*sri-caitanya-padambhoja madhupebhyo namo namah*

*kathancid asrayad yesam svapi tad-gandha-bhag bhavet*

TRANSLATION

*Let me repeatedly offer my respectful obeisances unto the beelike devotees who always taste the honey of the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. If even a doggish nondevotee somehow takes shelter of such devotees, he enjoys the aroma of the lotus flower.*

PURPORT

*The example of a dog is very significant in this connection. A dog naturally does not become a devotee at any time, but still it is sometimes found that a dog of a devotee gradually becomes a devotee also. We have actually seen that a dog has no respect even for the tulasi plant. Indeed, a dog is especially inclined to pass urine on the tulasi plant. Therefore the dog is the*

*number one nondevotee. But Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's sankirtana movement is so strong that even a doglike nondevotee can gradually become a devotee by the association of a devotee of Lord Caitanya. Srila Sivananda Sena, a great householder devotee of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, attracted a dog on the street while going to Jagannatha Puri. The dog began to follow him and ultimately went to see Caitanya Mahaprabhu and was liberated. Similarly, cats and dogs in the household of Srivasa Thakura were also liberated. Cats and dogs and other animals are not expected to become devotees, but in the association of a pure devotee they are also delivered. (Sri Caitanya-caritamrta Adi-lila, Chapter 10)*

So there is a history of merciful behavior toward dogs and other animals in our Sampradaya.

There was another point to be considered. It was a young woman making the request for assistance from a van full of celibate brahmacaris. That would have required her to also be transported with the injured animal in close quarters with us, which a strict brahmachari might object to.

The van pulled out of the gas station and we made it to the beach. We chanted some bhajans, led by Pancadravida swami, on the sand at the ocean shore. Some of us went for a dip in the cool waters. We did not associate with any bikini clad women or girls. We were a group of brahmacaris and one sannyasi. In Vedic culture, association with women is restricted for the brahmachari and sannyasa ashramas in particular.

*pumsah striya mithuni-bhavam etam tayor mitho hrdaya-granthim athuh  
ato grha-ksetra-sutapta-vittair janasya moho 'yam aham mameti*

#### TRANSLATION

*The attraction between male and female is the basic principle of material existence. On the basis of this misconception, which ties together the hearts of the male and female, one becomes attracted to his body, home, property, children, relatives and wealth. In this way one increases life's illusions and thinks in terms of 'I and mine.'" (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 5.5.8)*

*A brahmachari is trained to refrain from sex life. That is brahmachari. Celibacy. But if he's still not able then he's allowed to accept grhastha life. There is no cheating, hypocrisy, that I proclaim myself brahmachari or*

*sannyasi and I secretly do all nonsense. This is hypocrisy. The hypocritic life will not make one advanced in spiritual life. There is the example given by Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu.*

*(Then Srila Prabhupada related how Lord Caitanya rejected Chota Haridasa, a renunciate who looked lustfully at a young woman, but when He saw that Sivananda Sena's wife was pregnant He gave a name to the unborn child.)*

*One man, simply he saw with lusty desires a young woman, he was rejected. And one man had his wife pregnant He approved it, "That's alright."*

*So sex life is not forbidden in this movement, but hypocrisy is forbidden. If you become a hypocrite then there is no way. That is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's teaching. Chota Haridasa presented himself as a brahmachari and he was looking at a young woman, then He understood, he was a hypocrite, reject him. And Sivananda Sena, he was a grhastha, grhastha must have children, what is wrong with that? He said yes, My remnants of foodstuffs should be given.*

*This is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's movement. So our request is, don't be a hypocrite. There are four asramas: brahmachari, grhastha, vanaprastha, and sannyasa. Whichever asrama is suitable for you, you accept, but sincerely, don't be a hypocrite. This is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's movement. He didn't like hypocrisy. Nobody likes hypocrisy. Nobody likes.*

*But for a person who is seriously engaged in Krishna consciousness, sex life and material opulence are not very good (niskincarasya bhajanam...). Therefore voluntarily Caitanya Mahaprabhu accepted sannyasa. He was very nicely situated in His family life. When He was a family man He married twice. One wife died. He married again. But when he took sannyasa He was very, very strict. No woman could come very near to Him. This is Caitanya Mahaprabhu's teaching, so we have to follow strictly the rule and regulations, if we are serious. (5/23/76, Hawaii, Bhag. class) (Excerpted from Brahmacharya in Krishna Consciousness and A Brahmachari Reader by Bhakti Vikasa Swami)*

*So we swam a little and we chanted the holy names together. We associated with Pancadraida Swami and we generally kept to ourselves. That was our practical application of Lord Caitanya's teachings on*

brahmachari and sannyasa life. Then we left and returned back to home, back to 340 West 55th Street.

Still, the memory of the door closing in the face of the lady and the injured dog bothered me. Any enjoyment I experienced was diminished by my feelings of guilt. It could be said that we weren't perfect in our practical application of all aspects of the philosophy. Still, in our own faulty way, we were making the endeavor.

*nehabhikrama-naso'sti pratyavayo na vidyate*

*svalpam apy asya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat*

*In this endeavor there is no loss of diminution, and a little advancement on this path can protect one from the most dangerous type of fear.*

*PURPORT excerpt*

*Activity in Krishna consciousness, or acting for the benefit of Krishna without expectation of sense gratification, is the highest transcendental quality of work. Even a small beginning of such activity finds no impediment, nor can that small beginning be lost at any stage. Any work begun on the material plane has to be completed, otherwise the whole attempt becomes a failure. But any work begun in Krishna consciousness has a permanent effect, even though not finished. The performer of such work is therefore not at a loss even if his work in Krishna consciousness is incomplete. One percent done in Krishna consciousness bears permanent results, so that the next beginning is from the point of two percent; whereas, in material activity, without a hundred per cent success there is no profit ... (Srimad Bhagavad-gita, As It Is, Chapter 2, Text 40)*

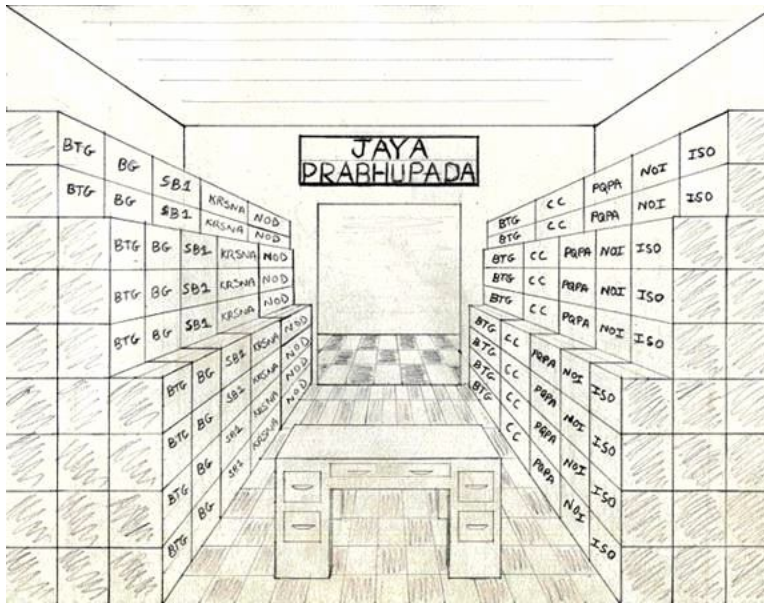
Finally, there was the time I tried to help the book distributors with their physical health. Some of the devotees were experiencing back and leg pains and bodily exhaustion after long hours carrying a heavy book bag around all day long while on sankirtana. I had some years of experience in maintaining good physical health and stamina. I was a member of the varsity basketball team and the track and field team in high school. After high school I took up weight training and hatha yoga. I possessed realized knowledge in the methods required to alleviate their pains and rejuvenate their bodily health.

I mentioned my experience to the senior sankirtana devotee, Sanjaya dasa prabhu, and he was enthusiastic to engage me in that service if it helped in any way to increase book distribution while at the same time improving the overall strength and vigor of the devotees. I knew of no similar program within the temple. Although it was approved by Sanjaya I still felt I had to get permission from a higher authority before I began such a program. I wrote to SDG to ask his opinion and possible permission.

Once I had permission we began a very brief program, in terms of time consumed, on the day back from sankirtana. Sunday mornings we would perform a few hatha yoga asanas and also a few simple calisthenics. That was all. It took only a half hour. The results were positive. The hatha yoga stretched the legs and backs and made them more supple and pain free. The calisthenics increased the intake of oxygen and increased the heart rate resulting in increased lung capacity, increased blood flow and more energy. It was quick, simple, required no equipment and everyone benefited.

One morning, after a few weeks of our little exercise program, I was standing across the aisle from Sanjaya prabhu during Mangala-arati. When he saw that I was looking in his direction he did a few jumping-jacks in the kirtana and smiled and laughed. That was my transcendental reward and thanks for assisting, in a small insignificant way, the sankirtana movement of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu.

I pray that all the Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis will forgive me for my offenses.



## CHAPTER 12

### SRILA PRABHUPADA'S BOOKROOM.

During my short time of service in Srila Prabhupada's bookroom on the southeast side of the second floor of Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira of 340 West 55th Street Manhattan I was blessed to serve the direct disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. Every day I would distribute laxmi and Srila Prabhupada's original unchanged books and Back to Godhead magazines to the sankirtan devotees. They would give me their association and tell me of their personal experiences and pastimes preaching the glories of chanting the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

I would sit or stand behind a desk while the Vaisnavas would come in to load up their book bags for another day of devotional service to Srila Prabhupada informing the public about the way back to home, back to Godhead.

After the disappearance of His Divine Grace, the original books or Srila Prabhupada's vani, in the author's humble opinion, became the heart and soul and life blood of the Manhattan temple in particular, and the Krishna consciousness movement Srila Prabhupada founded in general.

Without the original books there was no basis for a bona fide guru-disciple relationship.

Without the original books there was no basis for harinama sankirtana.

Without the original books there was no basis for moving into a temple, rising early in the morning, abstaining from the consumption of meat, fish, eggs and poultry, honoring prasadam, dressing in Vaisnava devotional attire, worshipping the Deities, following the 4 regulative principles, and chanting daily a minimum of 16 rounds of the Maha mantra.

Without the original books there was no basis for the existence of the Hare Krishna movement.

To be a servant of the servant of the servant, ad infinitum, of Srila Prabhupada's vani for that very short time was and is the pinnacle of the author's devotional life in this lifetime. To have had even an indirect hand in assisting the distribution of thousands of Srila Prabhupada's original books was a blessing. True, that's not much of a devotional accomplishment.

That's not the point.

As insignificant as the service seemed, for a relatively insignificant undeserving fallen spirit soul, it was still a bona fide transcendental service to Srila Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya. It was the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Bhagavan Sri Krishna's causeless mercy, without which this jiva would not exist.

## CHAPTER 13

### THE PARADE OF THE ZONAL ACARYAS AND THE PADA PHENOMENON.

In my short time living at 340 West 55th Street, six of the eleven original "zonal acaryas" visited and gave lectures. They were Bhagavan Goswami, Bhavananda Goswami, Kirtanananda Swami, Ramesvara Swami, Satsvarupa dasa Goswami (New York's Zonal Acarya), and Tamal Krishna Goswami.

I was hoping to write something meaningful concerning these original "zonal acaryas" who regularly made pilgrimage to the Hare Krishna Center in Manhattan, New York City during the period that I was a resident of Srila Prabhupada's skyscraper temple in 1978 and 1979.

Then I realized, what could a lowly worm, a bottom feeder, have to say of any significance about Srila Prabhupada's early disciples, both the men and the women? The line of sight of a maggot is lower than low and appallingly limited. But even the lowest of the low is part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and is capable of appreciation, though in a very limited way, of the causeless transcendental mercy and the purifying effect on body, mind and soul in the blessed association of the pure devotee.

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, out of compassion for all the fallen conditioned souls, rescued those initial followers from the dung heap of the material world. He picked them up with his lotus hands and lovingly placed them under his swan-like transcendental wings. He adopted them. He made them his spiritual sons and daughters. He bestowed upon them the exalted responsibility of directly assisting him in carrying out the order of his spiritual father, His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura and Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu in spreading the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE – in every town and village.

He gave them his nectarean love, his heart cleansing association, his perfect absolute instructions and his empowering blessings. They were made of his mercy. He generously supplied them with his personal transcendental literary ecstasies, his divine purports to the original Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Srimad-Bhagavatam and Sri Caitanya-caritamrta, to guide them unerringly, provided they followed those instructions. He did everything humanly and more-than-humanly possible for their, and the world's, eternal benefit.

All that a worm can do is envy them their immense other-worldly good fortune of being so inconceivably blessed. They were chosen by the Jagat-Guru Maha-Bhagavata Saktyavesa Avatara pure devotee of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and Sri Sri Radha Govinda to personally assist him in distributing Love of God to the world.

So I must necessarily wriggle cautiously, like the lowly grub that I am, among the surviving baby sprouts of my diminutive garden of devotional memories, and avoid offense – for the sake of Srila Prabhupada because he is their spiritual father, for their sake because they are his spiritual children, for the sake of all of Srila Prabhupada's shiksa disciples, and for the sake of my own worthless bug-like self.

Although the subject matter herein is focused on the "zonal acaryas", all of Srila Prabhupada's early disciples were similarly blessed by him to take up the Sankirtana Movement of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Srila Prabhupada's mercy was available to all the boys and girls, who were sent to him by Krishna to chant the holy names, chant the holy names, chant the Holy Names. So although I am speaking of the "zonal acaryas", I know for a fact that they were not the only fortunate souls to have the intimate association of the Founder Acharya at the beginning of the movement.

My envy is not limited to the mercy received by the zonals. In my enviousness I do not discriminate. I envy the unlimited mercy received by all the rest of you early disciples too! You were there right next to Srila Prabhupada, hearing the spiritual sound vibrations directly from his lotus mouth, chanting and dancing in kirtana with His Divine Grace, directly serving him, worshiping him, cooking for him, honoring the remnants of his foodstuffs.

Envy, envy, envy! That is why I am stuck in a material body in the material world – envy!

I met some of you way back in the late 1960's when I was a boy of 14. I was attracted to you when I saw you performing harinama sankirtana, chanting and dancing on a sidewalk in Manhattan. I just stood there staring. I will never forget it. Why didn't you kidnap me and place me at Srila Prabhupada's lotus feet when you had the chance?

## THE PARADE.

If one of the zonals arrived in the afternoon, there would be a big kirtana to welcome him and he would give an arrival address to the assembled devotees. The following morning he would give the Srimad-Bhagavatam class. We are all individual spirit souls with unique personalities, experiences and realizations. Likewise, each of the zonals had their own personality and their own experiences and realizations in Krishna consciousness and preached accordingly.

Since 340 West 55th Street was in Satsvarupa dasa Goswami's zone, all of the new devotees were expected to surrender to him as their spiritual master. It was an unwritten rule. There was no real choice in the matter. SDG was the guru for that zone and anyone aspiring for initiation had to surrender to him.

Unless an individual was strong-willed and independent in thought and very knowledgeable in sastra, which I was not, there was no other choice. If someone desired initiation from another "zonal acarya" they would possibly have to wait longer than the standard six to twelve months. There was possible verbal criticism from authorities and fellow bhaktas for not following the zonal way. There was possible isolation from the SDG aspirants who comprised a 100% majority of the uninitiated devotees. There was even the possibility of being required to move to another temple in another zone. You were swimming against the tide. You were definitely not encouraged to investigate the other "zonal acaryas" to see if you were more attracted to them or more enlivened by their preaching and association.

Here is how it was presented to me.

After living in the temple for a few months, I was asked by my bhakta leader, Niranjana dasa, if I had thought about initiation. Up to that time I was under the impression that Srila Prabhupada was my spiritual master. Everything I had learned was directly from the teachings of His Divine Grace. Not being a particularly inquisitive person, I assumed that Srila Prabhupada was my spiritual master.

**I HAD NO IDEA SRILA PRABHUPADA WAS NO LONGER PHYSICALLY PRESENT!**

As I have mentioned previously, everything was Prabhupada, Prabhupada, Prabhupada, Jai Prabhupada. Prabhupada did this. Prabhupada did that. Prabhupada said this. Prabhupada said that. All the books we read and studied and quoted and followed were Srila Prabhupada's original unchanged books. We worshipped Srila Prabhupada in Guru-puja every morning. All the kirtanas either began with or included Srila Prabhupada pranams. As far as I knew, everyone was a disciple of Srila Prabhupada. I never went around asking devotees who was their guru. I assumed it was Srila Prabhupada. No one ever mentioned that Srila Prabhupada had passed away – not in the Bhakta Program, not in Bhagavad-gita class and not in Srimad-Bhagavatam class. I never thought to ask either.

Why would I?

I had yet to see or hear Satsvarupa dasa Goswami (SDG) in New York. So when Niranjana prabhu showed me a picture of this very young devotee sitting on a vyasasana, holding a very large bead bag in his right hand and a danda in the other with a stern look on his face, and told me that he was going to be my guru, I felt disillusioned.

That's not Prabhupada. Who is that? He looks too young to be a guru. I felt so ignorant. Not that that was a new feeling. The feeling of ignorance has been a constant one in my life. How could I not know that the Founder Acharya was no longer on the planet? Even though there were all these zonals passing through I never put two and two together. Talk about being dumb as a rock. This is a stark example of the necessity of inquisitiveness in life in general and spiritual life in particular.

After that initial feeling of disappointment I followed the instructions of my authorities and the unwritten rule and accepted SDG as my spiritual master. New York was part of SDG's zone, so I accepted that I should aspire to take initiation from him. I was trained to follow orders from a very early age. My father was a Marine who demanded absolute obedience. When I was in the Navy I followed orders without question. It was in my blood to obey authority. So I surrendered and eventually, after a few letters exchanged and two darshans, I received a spiritual name from Satsvarupa dasa Goswami.

I surrendered of my own free will.

I will relate one more incident here concerning my personal experience with the "zonal acarya" system.

The GBC representative for New York, Adi Kesava Swami, held an Isthaghosti in the temple room with all the devotees in attendance a few weeks before I received my spiritual name. The theme of the Isthaghosti was pleasing the spiritual master.

At first he brought up the subject of the current attempt by the authorities to arrange a marriage between Vakresvara Pandita dasa and a brahmacarini. She had a white body and he had a black body. There were rumors being spread of improper behavior and other such things between them. The source of the rumors was not mentioned by name but by inference.

Adi Kesava asked the general audience of devotees "Is this pleasing to Srila Prabhupada, the spreading of malicious rumors about his disciples? How is it pleasing to our guru when we malign the character of our god-brother and god-sister?" There was no response from the assembled devotees.

Adi Kesava went on. "Ramabhadrā, how would you like it if I told your god-brothers and god-sisters all the crazy things that you have revealed to me in confidence? Would that be pleasing to Srila Prabhupada?" Ramabhadrā prabhu sat there and shook his head indicating no, it would not.

In hindsight, it may be said that Adi Kesava also was not pleasing Srila Prabhupada by making that embarrassing remark about Ramabhadrā before the assembly of devotees.

Adi Kesava paused while that sunk in to everyone's consciousness. The inference was obvious even to my dull brain.

Then he said my name. "What about bhakta John?"

My heart sank and I wanted to run right out of the temple room. Me? What did I do? First rumors of impropriety, then crazy consciousness and now the finger is pointing at me. What heinous offense did I commit to displease my guru and have it revealed before the entire community of Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis? This is not good.

"In his initiation letter to Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, this is one of the reasons that bhakta John gave for accepting Satsvarupa maharaja as his

spiritual master. 'My body took birth in New York City. New York City is part of your zone. I therefore surrender unto you, O Gurudeva, and accept you as my spiritual master.'"

Adi Kesava continued. "Satsvarupa maharaja was very pleased with that response. We were on the plane traveling and as he read that he showed it to me and he was quite pleased. So bhakta John pleased his spiritual master."

I was pleasantly surprised to be held up as an example of pleasing the spiritual master and also relieved. Unfortunately, in my humble opinion, it was a concocted system that was perpetrated on the devotees after Srila Prabhupada's disappearance. The zonal acharya system was bogus. I and so many other unfortunate souls fell for it hook, line and sinker.

In my humble opinion, that is the preeminent cause of all the current problems in the society. The root problem officially manifested in March of 1978 with the monumental hoax of eleven conditioned souls masquerading as Maha-Bhagavata pure devotees, although the roots began not-so-subtly manifesting years before. They were not ordered by Srila Prabhupada to become diksa gurus. That weed has never been fully uprooted. It spread with the "guru reform" (an oxymoron if there ever was one) movement, and then further expanded with the spurious "voted in" guru system. Dozens of these voted-in gurus eventually fell down. What can be done?

I was not there when Srila Prabhupada's manifest pastimes concluded. There are so many differing versions of the events of his last days. He appointed eleven. He didn't appoint eleven. He was poisoned. He wasn't poisoned. He wanted all of his disciples to come to Vrndavana to see him. He didn't want all of his disciples to come. Some disciples say they were prevented from going to see him. Others say that never happened. There are so many sides and versions of that crucial time in history, that a fallen conditioned soul like me cannot say, with complete conviction or indisputable evidence, what the truth is. I only offer my insignificant opinion. Other than Srila Prabhupada, Krishna knows the truth because He is the Absolute Truth; and also Yamadharma.

What I can say, and I speak only for myself based on my own personal experience, is how unlimitedly fortunate I was to have lived in the temple

at 340 West 55th Street even though Srila Prabhupada was no longer physically present. In 1978 and 1979, unlike today, the vast majority of devotees who lived in the temple and who charitably gave me their Krishna conscious association, were his direct disciples.

It was a great blessing for me to live in the brahmacari ashram when there were still fresh remnants of the purifying dust of Srila Prabhupada's lotus feet in the hearts of his disciples. Traces of his transcendental footprints were still visible on the altar, in the temple room, in the kitchen, in the prasadam hall and everywhere else in the skyscraper temple he established for Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Govinda on 340 West 55th Street, Manhattan, New York City.

I learned the true unchanged basics of bhakti yoga from the original teachings of His Divine Grace. The day-to-day continuous consistent example of his disciples' spiritual humility and loving behavior, and their eager willingness to educate and enlighten this fallen fool, set me on the proper path back to home, back to Godhead.

They weren't forced; it was part of their voluntary service, in separation, to Srila Prabhupada. By their selfless actions, they exhibited their sense of duty to their spiritual master to freely give Krishna consciousness to the fallen conditioned souls.

I will forever be in their debt.

As for the "zonal acharyas" who visited and gave arrival addresses and Srimad-Bhagavatam class, I will give my inconsequential impressions of their differing styles of preaching.

Bhagavan Goswami was the first of the zonals I witnessed giving Srimad-Bhagavatam class. I had been a resident for about a week or so. He was soft spoken and appeared to be humble.

Bhavananda Goswami was a bit theatrical, sometimes soft spoken and sometimes loud and brash to make a point. I had the impression that his lectures were somewhat rehearsed. He would stop sometimes in the middle of a sentence, repeat the words he just spoke as if he were remembering his lines, and then he would continue. You could tell he enjoyed putting on a performance. I recall in the 80's in the Brooklyn

temple, he gave a Sunday Feast lecture, and more than once he stopped speaking in mid-sentence to pose with a big smile for the devotees in the class who were taking pictures of him.

Kirtanananda Swami gave off a wise grandfatherly vibe. He spoke softly and authoritatively. Grandpa had seen it all and done it all and knew it all.

Ramesvara Swami was fired up about book distribution. Preach, preach, and preach. His style was definitely not soft spoken. Even when he spoke in a normal voice and volume, it seemed as if he were yelling at you. And then he *would* yell at you. You did not fall asleep in his class.

Tamal Krishna Goswami was not-so-affectionately called Turmoil Krishna by some of his god-brothers. I recall one lecture he gave when there was a young man with long blond hair and typical hippie attire in the class. TKG spent almost the entire Srimad-Bhagavatam class attempting to convince the young man to surrender. He was not successful. I was disappointed because he had claimed in a previous lecture that his only opulence, if he had any, was that he could convince people to surrender to Krishna.

Satsvarupa dasa Goswami was also soft spoken in his lectures. In one class, after a few of his "zonal acarya" god-brothers had visited and gave well-received classes, he made a point of stating that he was not there to "put on a show". "It's not a competition."

Once he mentioned that it wasn't a competition it seemed as if there was a bit of a competition, at least in New York, to "put on a show". After all, the news would spread quickly to the other temples if so-and-so maharaja fired up the devotees in New York to preach. There were disciples to be made and guru daksina to accumulate and power to consolidate. It didn't hurt to make a good impression in a Maha temple and enhance your reputation as an advanced devotee, which might increase your popularity and the number of your disciples.

Spiritual competition is transcendental as long as it is actually spiritual.

THE PADA PHENOMENON.

*"Indeed, the advanced uttama-adhikari Vaisnava devotee should be accepted as a spiritual master. Everything one possesses should be offered to him, for it is enjoined that one should deliver whatever he has to the*

*spiritual master. The brahmacari in particular is supposed to beg alms from others and offer them to the spiritual master. However, one should not imitate the behavior of an advanced devotee or Maha-Bhagavata without being self-realized, for by such imitation one will eventually become degraded." (The Nectar of Instruction, Text Five)*

As far as I understand, the title Prabhupada means the master at whose feet all other masters sit. All eleven "zonal acaryas", in apparent imitation of their spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada, the Founder Acharya, took similar honorific titles such as Gurupada, Visnupada, Bhaktipada, Bhagavatpada, Acharyadeva and so on.

Prior to the all-merciful intervention of the authentic Maha-Bhagavata devotee of Lord Krishna, those same eleven disciples of Srila Prabhupada had spent their lives as mlecchas, engaging in illicit sex, meat eating, gambling and intoxication.

Since His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami accepted the honorific title of Prabhupada from his disciples, those original eleven, who now apparently saw themselves as equals to their spiritual master, felt that they should also have similar honorific titles. One justification they offered was that their disciples would see them in a similar light as the Founder Acharya. It would be good for the faith of their followers and the Krishna consciousness movement.

I fear that Maya covered them all with a cloak of forgetfulness. They forgot about their recent past spent on the mundane platform of existence and began mistakenly promoting their ostentatious worship as Maha Bhagavatas. It is tragic that their actions caused so many of their god-brothers and god-sisters to leave. The mass exodus of Srila Prabhupada's disciples did not seem to matter to them once their opulent lifestyles were established.

In my humble opinion, what mattered most was the swift consolidation of power over all. They were transformed by Maya into mad elephants trampling their devotional creepers. They similarly crushed anyone who opposed their narcissistic hegemony. If you didn't bow down at their feet you would soon feel those feet on your backside kicking you out the door.

Becoming a "pada" was just part of the process of diminishing the paramount spiritual stature of the Founder Acharya, Srila Prabhupada, forcing their god-brothers and god-sisters to accept their fabricated elevated position and worship them or leave, and taking complete control of all the assets of the society.

I apologize if some of my words were harsh. I really tried to be inoffensive but what I believe to be the truth got the better of me.

## CHAPTER 14

### THE STORY OF BUTTER AND FIRE (A THIRD PERSON NARRATIVE).

*catur-vidha bhajante mam janah sukrino'rjuna*

*arto jijnasur artharthi jnani ca bharatarsabha*

#### TRANSLATION -

*O best among the Bharatas [Arjuna], four kinds of pious men render devotional service unto Me – the distressed, the desirer of wealth, the inquisitive, and he who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute.*

#### PURPORT excerpt -

*Unlike the miscreants, these are adherents of the regulative principles of the scriptures, and they are called sukrina, or those who obey the rules and regulations of scriptures, the moral and social laws, and are, more or less, devoted to the Supreme Lord. Out of these there are four classes of men – those who are sometimes distressed, those who are in need of money, those who are sometimes inquisitive, and those who are sometimes searching after knowledge of the Absolute Truth. These persons come to the Supreme Lord for devotional service under different conditions. These are not pure devotees because they have some aspiration to fulfill in exchange for devotional service. Pure devotional service is without aspiration and without desire for material profit. The Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu defines devotion thus:*

*anyabhilasitasunyam jnana-karmady-anavrtam*

*anukulyena krsnanusilanam bhaktir uttama*

*“One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord Krishna favorably and without desire for material profit or gain through fruitive activities or philosophical speculation. That is called pure devotional service.” (Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 7, Text 16)*

More than once upon a time there was a young man named John who joined the Hare Krishna Movement. He was not exactly pious having engaged in illicit sex life and intoxication and gambling and meat eating prior to his affiliation with the devotees of Krishna. He was a mix of all four of the above mentioned types of pious men who render devotional service

to the Supreme Lord. He was certainly experiencing a distressful material existence, he was in need of money, he was somewhat inquisitive about life in general and he had been subconsciously searching, during his brief existence, for the Absolute Truth.

He was also a seeker of adventure. He was single and unattached, a bachelor. He was in his early twenties. He had traveled to different parts of the world while in the United States Navy. In his early youth he filled his head with comic book adventure stories. He read all types of science fiction and fantasy and adventure novels. He left home years ago and never looked back.

So when he was introduced to the devotees residing in the ashrama in Manhattan and learned all about their lifestyle, he unhesitatingly joined them. For him it was a transcendental adventure. And what an adventure it was! To hear him tell it, it was the best time of his life. It was, to him, a never-never land, a nirvana, a utopia. He was actually living in, and was an active participant in, a spiritual community.

He came from very humble beginnings and now he was living in a Manhattan skyscraper. He went from a peasant's barn to a rich man's castle. After years working in Manhattan as a foot messenger and making deliveries to rich people's penthouse apartments and envying them their elite positions in life, he was now living among them.

For the most part, he was earnest in his attempt to assimilate and conform to all the different rules and regulations, customs and traditions, of his new found lifestyle. He wanted to absorb himself completely in his new exciting exhilarating spiritual culture.

Let us jump ahead a bit. He is shaved up and wearing dhoti and tilaka and following the 4 regulative principles and chanting 16 rounds every day of the Hare Krishna maha mantra – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE. He rises early every morning and attends the morning and evening programs and engages in devotional service.

He is attracted to the Deities of Lord Jagannatha, Lord Baladeva and Lady Subhadra. Sometimes he chants the prayers of the Sri Jagannathastaka while taking Their darshan. He is also drawn to the painting of Srila

Jagannatha das Babaji which hangs on the wall behind the vyasasanas in the temple room. Every day, when there is no one else in the temple room, he quietly chants some of his rounds while sitting on the floor near the Babaji's painting. His relationship with the Babaji is private and very personal. Sometimes he has questions which he addresses to him. Other times he expresses his desires. One of those desires was to receive the spiritual name of Jagannatha dasa just like the Babaji. He prayed to the Babaji for that boon.

One Sunday morning, during a Srimad-Bhagavatam class, a funny thing happened. There were many funny things which happened during Srimad-Bhagavatam classes. This is just the one that has to do with the title of this chapter.

During class the speaker would be seated in the middle of the south side of the temple room facing north. The assembled devotees would be facing him with the matajis to his right nearest Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana. The men would sit to his left nearest the Deities. The senior devotees, both men and women, would be seated in front and behind them the less senior and so on to the back of the room where the newest devotees would sit. The men and women were separate.

Bhakta John was seated towards the rear with a group of his fellow bhaktas. While listening as well as he could to the lecture he noticed that a young Vaisnavi, seated closer to the front than he, turned her head and looked at him. A few minutes later she did it again. And then again.

A brahmacari is not supposed to have any association with a woman. The general rule in the temple at the time regarding this – don't look at the women and don't talk to the women except for "pass the salt, please." All courtesy and respect and gentlemanly attitude and action should be present in any dealings but association should be avoided if possible.

He couldn't help but notice the brahmacarini now. She had very dark brown skin and curly black hair. He wondered why she was looking at him. He did not know her. This was the first time he was even aware of her existence. He tried in vain to pay attention to the speaker but his concentration was lost.

When the lecture was over and the devotees left the temple room he joined his little group of bhaktas in the hallway. There was Bhakta Al, Bhakta Mitch, Bhakta Barry, Kaunteya das prabhu and a few others gathered just outside the doorway and engaged in a private discussion. Bhakta John joined the group just as Bhakta Al was saying “she was looking at me.” Then Kaunteya prabhu retorted ‘No, she was looking at me!’ Then someone else proclaimed “You’re all wrong prabhus. She was definitely looking at me.” To which the group chuckled in unison. Bhakta John kept his opinion to himself. No sense adding his own foolishness to the growing embarrassing pile.

Bhakta John and his fellow bhaktas went on with their devotional service that day. Since it was a Sunday there were plenty of pots and pans in Srimati Radharani’s kitchen to be scrubbed. There were fruits and vegetables to be washed and cut and the whole activity of Bhakta John’s day was helping to prepare the Free Sunday Love Feast.

Part of Bhakta John’s service was setting up the tables for serving the prasadam. He had to unfold them and place them in rows in the rooms on the third floor. There were serving containers and utensils to be brought up from the kitchen. There were plastic spoons and paper plates to be distributed.

While in the midst of all this devotional activity a not-so-funny thing happened. He was alone in one of the rooms setting up the containers of prasadam when in walks the very same young mataji who all his fellow bhaktas were discussing that morning. She walked directly to him. He was standing behind a table and she was on the other side.

She took a plate and spoon and he served her the prasadam.

She smiled at him. He smiled at her. And that was that.

Just one look – that’s all it took.

Neither one of them said a word. They just smiled at each other and then she left.

*nanv agniḥ pramadā nāma ghr̥ta-kumbha-samaḥ pumān*

*sutām api raho jahyād anyadā yāvad-artha-kṛt*

*Translation -*

*Woman is compared to fire, and man to a butter pot. Therefore a man should avoid associating even with his own daughter in a secluded place. Similarly, he should also avoid association with other women. One should associate with women only for important business and not otherwise.*

*PURPORT –*

*If a butter pot and fire are kept together, the butter within the pot will certainly melt. Woman is compared to fire, and man is compared to a butter pot. However advanced one may be in restraining the senses, it is almost impossible for a man to keep himself controlled in the presence of a woman, even if she is his own daughter, mother or sister. Indeed, his mind is agitated even if one is in the renounced order of life. Therefore, Vedic civilization carefully restricts mingling between men and women. If one cannot understand the basic principle of restraining association between man and woman, he is to be considered an animal. That is the purport of this verse. (Srimad-bhagavatam, 7th Canto, 12th Chapter, 9th Text)*

Here is a joke which Bhakta John heard once. A brahmacari approached a brahmacarini in the temple. The brahmacari said to the brahmacarini – “I’m in maya and you’re in maya. Why don’t we be in maya together?”

No. Bhakta John never tried that. Bhakta John never even spoke to the smiling mataji. But he was melting. During Tulasi kirtanas he began to notice the young mataji and would surreptitiously glance at her as she danced. He saw grace and beauty in her movements.

What about the transcendental grace and beauty of Srimati Tulasi devi?

When he prayed beneath the painting of the Babaji his thoughts went to her. He even prayed and petitioned the Babaji to please arrange for him to marry the young bhaktin.

What about the desire to be named Jagannatha dasa? What about prayers for Lord Jagannatha, Lord Baladeva and Lady Subhadra?

This was just one of many non-devotional instances which accumulated and eventually led to his gross spiritual fall down. Actually, from the first mutual

smiles, they both may have been considered to have fallen down. It may be considered more subtle than gross.

You are a poor ignorant foolish person, Bhakta John.

Not a word was spoken between them. Not one activity shared. No association at all. And he was lost in the lap of maya. A short time later, maybe a month or so, she left the temple. She never left his mind and heart. They did, either by Krishna's arrangement or maya's, depending on your point of view, cross paths months later in the temple in Puerto Rico. They eventually married.

Did they live happily ever after?

Bhakta John was initiated and received the spiritual name Jagannatha dasa. He was most fortunate to join the Vaisnavi he prayed for in marriage. They were happy in Krishna consciousness for many years. Unfortunately her body suffered from a disease from childhood all her life which eventually caused her to leave her body in the prime of life. Bhakta John has been living a solitary existence since then.

Even so, he still chants Hare, Krishna and Rama. He still aspires to be a Vaisnava devotee of the Lord. What is the alternative? There is no alternative, there is no alternative, there is no alternative than to chant the holy names, chant the holy names, chant the holy names!

## CHAPTER 15

### PUKKA VAISNAVA.

I had been living the life of a sadhaka for six months. I knew pretty much all I needed to know. Didn't I? I chanted sixteen rounds of the maha mantra every day. I followed the four regulative principles. I could dress in dhoti, kurta and tilaka with ease, although I knew only one basic style. I read the Bhagavad-gita, As It Is cover to cover. I attended Srimad-Bhagavatam and Bhagavad-gita class daily. Six days a week I went on harinama sankirtana in Times Square. I was engaged in devotional service 24/7. I was looking forward to the possibility of harinama initiation in the near future.

The young brahmacarini, the one I never spoke to but only shared a smile, the object of my foolish mundane attraction and desire, was just...gone. Just like that. She left the temple. My brief dalliance with illusion was over. Or was it?

Apparently, instead of seeing the true nature of the young aspiring Vaisnavi, I was seeing only the covering. I was thinking of mundane sense gratification. Thinking, feeling and willing. I was seeing her as an object of material desire instead of respecting her as a fellow spirit soul on the path back to home, back to Godhead.

Once my thinking was stinking in that way, on the mental platform, I began seeing everyone else in that way.

"You're not spirit soul, you're that body."

I believe its called frustration of material desires. My resultant skewed perception of reality I believe is called emotional immaturity. Instead of seeing my shortcomings and realizing and accepting the truth of my fallen condition I began to project those shortcomings onto my perception of others.

After Mangala-arati one morning, I walked downstairs to the restaurant for some Krishna conscious association with my friend and god-brother Bhakta Al. Hamsarupa dasa prabhu was the restaurant manager. I stood in front of the serving counter impeccably dressed, in my mind, when Hamsarupa prabhu carried in some serving trays and placed them behind the counter.

Hamsarupa prabhu then praised me for being an exemplary bhakta. Most of Srila Prabhupada's disciples that gave me their association were like that; ready to offer praise and encouragement for any accomplishment, great or small. The phrase he used stuck in my consciousness – "pukka Vaisnava". If you describe something or someone as pukka, you mean that they are real or genuine, and of good quality.

THE FLY.

Ordinarily, I enjoyed chanting japa congregationally in the temple room with the brahmacaris. Every morning over a hundred aspiring Vaisnavas begged the Lord to please engage them in His devotional service. I was happy to be a part of it.

I sat down with my back to one of the pillars in the temple room and tried to chant. Some devotees stood on the sides, some sat like me, some circumambulated. Everyone was chanting the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

This morning, I noticed things which I never noticed before. I found fault in every direction.

I noticed some of the devotees circumambulating the temple room had dirty feet.

My mind said "You're supposed to wash your feet before entering the temple room."

One diminutive devotee would walk heavy on his heels, and though he weighed maybe 90 pounds soaking wet, now his footfalls, every time he passed by, were more like noisy mini-bombs "boom boom boom" shaking my shallow concentration.

I looked around at the devotees chanting. Some shook their heads from side to side and back and forth and round and round. Just looking at them was making me dizzy. Some had a finger of the left hand digging into the left ear to hear their chanting. Some pale-faced brahmacaris had crimson red faces from the intense effort of personal sravanam kirtanam. Over-sized rows of clashing gnashing teeth kept popping out of those scarlet faces on every "Krishna Krishna"!

Then “Boom! Boom! Boom!” again, and more dirty feet kicking up dust and not dust from “lotus feet”!

A devotee sits down next to me. The prabhu’s body odor overwhelms my agitated senses. My mind says “Prabhu, you’re supposed to stand under the water when you shower. Apparently the prabhu prefers air baths to ones utilizing soap and water.”

THE BEE.

Exercising some minor self-awareness, I rise and leave the temple room to avoid more offensive thoughts. I find a quiet space. Sitting on the couch in the hallway of the lobby across from the elevator and near the main entrance, I attempt to chant japa.

Barely one Hare Krishna escapes my lips when a brahmacari, who is a complete stranger to me, steps through the front doors and walks directly to me.

My mind whines, “Who the heck is this and why the heck is he coming over here to bother me? Can’t he see I’m chanting my rounds?”

With hands folded he prayerfully requests “Please accept my humble obeisances,” and is in full dandavats before I quickly all-in-one-motion jump up and say “Please accept mine,” and fall face-first to the floor and we are both at full flat-out head-to-head dandavats.

*vancha-kalpatarubhyas ca krpa-sindhubhya eva ca*

*patitanam pavanebhyo vaisnavebhyo namo namah*

We both stand and exchange Hare Krishnas with hands folded and heads slightly bowed pranams. He went to the temple room. I went back to my seat on the couch and tried to chant japa.

My mind and my false ego both exclaim in unison, “See! We told you! You are a pukka Vaisnava! Even complete strangers recognize your transcendental qualities!”

Never mind my current offensive thoughts, desires and actions.

Self-awareness? What’s that

This is maya or that which is not.

Soon it was time for Sringara-arati and Guru-puja and Srimad-Bhagavatam class.

As Krishna would arrange it, the class was given by the brahmacari I just met.

The following is the gist of the class I was privileged to hear that morning.

*"I offer my most humble obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master and eternal father, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and beg from His Divine Grace his kind mercy. Without the mercy of His Divine Grace, it is completely beyond the power of this most unqualified pupil to utter even a fraction of a single word describing the transcendental qualities of the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna. I therefore completely and fully depend on the kind and causeless mercy of my eternal father, Srila Prabhupada."*

*"There are innumerable atmas (living entities), each being a quantum of consciousness. Each atma resides temporarily in an ephemeral biological form, according to the atma's consciousness. This consciousness is due to the atma alone, but the content of the atma's consciousness is due to its interactions with the particular body it occupies. The material body can be divided into two categories: the gross and the subtle. The subtle body is made up of mind, intelligence, and the apparent self (or the false identification of one's self with the material body). The gross body is made up of the five gross elements – solid matter, liquids, radiant energy, gases, and ethereal substances. The interaction of the individual atma with the gross and subtle bodies produces inconceivably complex reactions, which cannot be explained by simple chemistry and physics in the living cell. That is why chemistry and physics cannot explain why there is so much difference between a living body and a dead one. Simply put, when the individual living being leaves the body, the live body becomes dead matter – although all the chemicals necessary for the functioning of the living organism are still present."*

*"The main trouble with material scientists is that they generally neglect the most important and fundamental aspect of their inquiries. For example, when Newton saw the falling of the apple, he asked why and how the apple*

*fell. However, he did not inquire who caused the falling of the apple. As an answer to his inquiry, he discovered the laws of gravitation. His answer was that the apple fell because of the laws of gravitation. But who made the laws of gravitation? Srila Prabhupada kindly explains that the apple did not fall while green but while ripe. Therefore Newton's gravitational theory was not enough to explain the falling of the apple. There is some other cause behind the total scene of the falling and, thereby, behind the law of gravitation. That cause is Lord Sri Krishna. In Bhagavad-gita we find, vasudevah sarvam iti: "Krishna is the cause of all causes." Furthermore, scientists have to know that the little ability they have is also given by the Lord. Krishna says, paurusam nrsu: "I am the ability in man."*

*"We therefore humbly request everyone – scientists, philosophers, businessmen, politicians, etc. – to please chant the maha-mantra: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. This will cleanse the accumulated dust from the heart and lead to the understanding of Krishna consciousness, the supreme absolute science, the ultimate goal of life." (The Scientific Basis of Krishna Consciousness 1974, Consciousness The Missing Link 1980)*

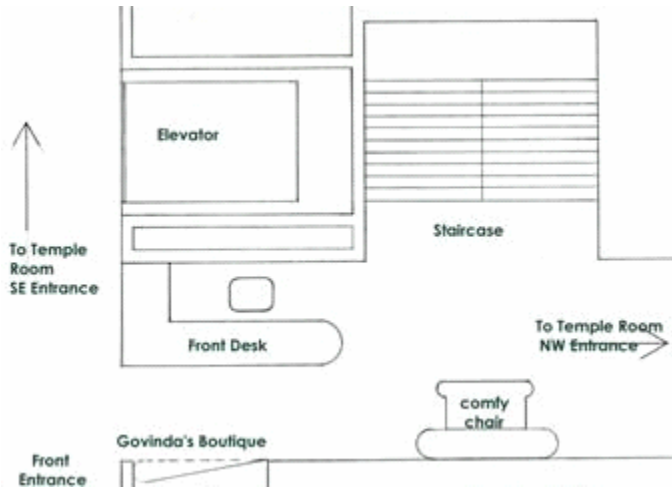
Then he was known as Svarupa Damodara dasa Brahmachari (ACBSP).

He offered obeisances to me! Such an advanced Vaisnava devotee of Lord Sri Krishna, son of Vaisnava devotees, dear dedicated disciple of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, and a college educated scientist with multiple degrees and honors, offered obeisances to this uneducated nonsensical envious fool of a rascal mleccha, and a complete stranger to him. I was both emotionally and spiritually, humbled and rewarded. I heard such a wonderful Srimad-Bhagavatam class given by a pukka pukka Vaisnava.

*Srila Prabhupada instructed him to write books and articles that scientifically present Krishna consciousness or Bhagavata culture. He was the only disciple of Srila Prabhupada to write a book during Srila Prabhupada's lifetime that Srila Prabhupada himself ordered to be printed and distributed en masse. The book is entitled, The Scientific Basis of Krishna Consciousness and is based on instructions he received from Srila Prabhupada. He offered the book to Srila Prabhupada on his Vyasa Puja day, in Los Angeles, in 1973. Srila Prabhupada ordered the Bhaktivedanta Book*

*Trust (BBT) to publish and print over 100,000 copies of the book.  
(Bhagavata Sevarpanam Publications)*

*"The value of a moment's association with the devotee of the Lord cannot even be compared to the attainment of heavenly planets or liberation from matter, and what to speak of worldly benedictions in the form of material prosperity, which are for those who are meant for death." (Srimad-Bhagavatam Canto 1, Chapter 18, Text 13)*



## CHAPTER 16

### THE LOBBY

#### THE BIG COMFY CHAIR AND THE STAIRCASE.

The lobby, after Mangala-arati, was my sometime resort for personal sravanam kirtanam – quietly chanting the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

*"It is said in Caitanya-caritamṛta (Madhya 22.107):*

*nitya-siddha kṛṣṇa-prema 'sādhya' kabhu naya*

*sravanadi-suddha-citte karaye udaya*

*'Pure love of Krishna is eternally established in the hearts of living entities. It is not something to be gained from another source. When the heart is purified by hearing and chanting, the living entity naturally awakens.' Since Krishna consciousness is inherent in every living entity, everyone should be given a chance to hear about Krishna. Simply by hearing and chanting – sravanam kirtanam – one's heart is directly purified, and one's original Krishna consciousness is immediately awakened. Krishna consciousness is not artificially imposed upon the heart, it is already there. When one chants the holy name of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the heart is cleansed of all mundane contamination."* (Nectar of Instruction, Text Four)

There was plenty of open space and plenty of fellow sadhakas engaged in the same activity of Krishna consciousness.

My favorite spot was the big comfy chair next to the entrance of Govinda's Boutique for one singular obvious reason – it was big and comfy. It was a great spot to rest my material body after all my youthful enthusiastic full-tilt jumping up and down and chanting and banging the karatalas during Mangala-arati.

It also was directly across from the staircase where the rank and file devotees would ascend and descend.

I have two memories I want to share in relation to devotees on the staircase as viewed from my vantage point sitting in the big comfy chair.

Previously I wrote about the full-time book distributor bhakta Steve and how he literally flipped his wig while on sankirtana in the Port Authority building. He loudly exclaimed to the public that the Hare Krishna's were going to take over the world. Unbeknownst to him he was being observed by a newspaper political cartoonist and soon became the cartoonist's embarrassing subject for print. His caricature was posted outside of the temple president's office for all to see and he was loudly and publicly admonished by the temple president Romapada dasa brahmacari for being a source of negative publicity for the society in general and the New York branch in particular.

The following morning Romapada was chanting japa in the lobby walking back and forth among the fellow residents of Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira. I was sitting in my favorite spot across from the stairs when I noticed bhakta Steve descending at the same time that Romapada was walking by. Romapada saw bhakta Steve, approached him and requested that he please accept his humble obeisances. Bhakta Steve and Romapada went to full dandavats on the floor and recited the familiar:

*vancha-kalpatarubhyas ca krpa-sindhubhya eva ca*

*patitanam pavanebhyo vaisnavebhyo namo namah*

*"I offer my respectful obeisances unto all the Vaisnava devotees of the Lord who can fulfill the desires of everyone, just like desire trees, and who are full of compassion for the fallen souls."*

The second memory image that has stayed with me through the years has to do with a devotee that I never had any personal association with and

never actually met. I would see this devotee only at the times in the mornings I sat in the big comfy chair and the devotee descended the stairs to the basement. Even though I never knew or know this disciple of Srila Prabhupada and devotee of Krishna, the one impression that I had of this devotee, derived from that momentary visual association, was spiritual fortitude, strength of character.

The second impression that I had, and this was more about some of the residents of the temple and their attitude towards this devotee, I sensed that the authorities of the temple were, for whatever reason, fearful of this devotee. They gave this devotee a wide berth, at least publicly. I don't really know how to account for that feeling. It was just something I felt in the social atmosphere of the Mandira.

The devotee I am speaking of is Mahavegavati devi dasi. I recall she always wore a white sari with her head covered and used a cane to slowly descend the stairs. Observing her walking down the stairs was the only association I had with the Vaisnavi.

#### THE FRONT DESK.

First impressions are important. The first impression one received upon entering the temple lobby during business hours at 340 West 55TH Street was the always smiling kind hearted devotee Trilokesvara dasa brahmacari, perpetually perched behind the front desk.

Every morning, right after Greeting of the Deities and Guru-puja, His Grace Trilokesvara dasa would sit behind the front desk. He would put on his head set and turn on the switchboard and direct all incoming and outgoing phone calls to their proper recipients. When breakfast prasadam was served a devotee would bring a plate to Trilokesvara prabhu so he wouldn't have to interrupt his service.

Any person who entered Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira was welcomed with a friendly smile and a "Hare Krishna" from Trilokesvara prabhu. Any time I had to leave the temple on an errand, Trilokesvara would stop me and sincerely caution me to beware of the illusory energy or Maya. "There is danger in every step in the material world, so please be careful prabhu and return safely."

One memory I have of the front desk is a bit comical. I just happened to be there one afternoon when Brahmananda swami and Adi Kesava swami stepped off the elevator and walked to the front desk. They were both attired in karmi clothes. I don't know where they were going or what they were doing but there they were in these ill-fitting shirts and slacks speaking with Trilokesvara. Brahmananda had a very large body. He must have weighed at least 300 pounds while the thin as a rail Adi Kesava barely weighed 100 pounds soaking wet. The incredible contrast in their body sizes, dressed in non-devotional clothes, always stuck in my mind. They just did not look right with no dandas, no sannyasa robes and no tilaka. They also appeared to be very uncomfortable in those outfits. It still makes me laugh recalling the absurd appearance not only of their contrary physical extremes but here were two swamis dressed like cheesy tourists.

#### GOVINDA'S BOUTIQUE.

Looking for a new book by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami? You've come to the right place good sir. How about this very recent publication, a small transcendental book titled "Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers"?

Perhaps I can interest you in a first class t-shirt with the images of their Lordships Jagannatha, Baladeva and Lady Subhadra? It will last for many years as a divine memento or souvenir of the Festival of the Chariots the New York City Ratha Yatra.

The transcendental salesman in Govinda's Boutique of 340 West 55th Street was Kapindra dasa brahmacari.

Kapindra prabhu was always preaching Krishna consciousness. Whenever I had to go to the first floor running an errand the prabhu would stop me and tell me what he had read in Srila Prabhupada's books that day. No matter my imagined urgency of my service he would keep me there until he finished making Srila Prabhupada's point.

After many similar instances of him feeding my jaundiced consciousness with the rock candy of Krishna consciousness and momentarily delaying me from keeping my appointed duties I decided I would turn the tables. I thought that if I told him what I had read in the Founder Acharya's books

before he had a chance to start preaching to me that I would be able to get to my service as soon as I was done preaching to him.

I was attempting to go against the recommended Vaisnava devotional process as explained in Srila Prabhupada's Nectar of Instruction, an authorized English presentation of Srila Rupa Goswami's Sri Upadesamrta. In this regard in the purport to Text Four it states: *"...Srila Rupa Goswami explains how to perform devotional activities in the association of other devotees...An experienced devotee explains, and an inexperienced devotee learns from him. This is guhyam akhyati prcchati."*

Oh prabhu mind you are such a fool.

At the next opportunity I put my feeble-minded plan into action. As soon as I walked downstairs and landed on the first floor lobby there was Kapindra prabhu standing in front of the entrance to Govinda's Boutique ready for any opportunity to preach. Before he could open his mouth I began to recite the Sanskrit verse and translation and purport I had read that morning in the Bhagavad-gita As It Is, and even gave my extremely limited neophyte understanding of the verse.

Mission accomplished. I was ready to go on my way.

Or so I thought.

Kapindra prabhu graciously complimented me on what I had said and then expounded on that verse and the preceding and following verses in the Gita which delved more deeply and painted a more complete picture of the subject. Then he quoted a few verses from the Srimad-Bhagavatam which further expanded on the meaning of the Gita verses. He then moved on to the Sri Caitanya-caritamrta quoting verse after verse on a similar subject. I was there being purified more than twice as long as usual by this nice disciple of Srila Prabhupada.

## LOBBY DREAM.

In closing, the quote below, from the author's journal entry, describing a dream of April 2, 1997, illustrates how, although almost two decades had transpired since being a resident of Srila Prabhupada's skyscraper temple in Manhattan, the memory of the time engaged in that spiritually purifying atmosphere and sadhu sanga lifestyle was still permeating the consciousness and sub-consciousness.

"I was upstairs in the temple in Manhattan when I heard the conch blow for Sundara-arati. I went down the stairs. When I reached the ground floor I looked towards the entrance to the building. I could see passersby outside. As I looked towards the doors I heard a devotee's voice loudly call out 'Are you going to the evening class?' I started hurrying upstairs to go to my room to put on a fresh dhoti."

That was a sleeping dream. For this fortunate jiva the time spent as a brahmachari resident of Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira was a transcendental waking dream that I pray I never forget.



"I looked towards the entrance..."

## CHAPTER 17

### ARRIVAL OF THE BACK TO GODHEAD MAGAZINE.

I make this swear / promise to the Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis and to Srila Prabhupada and to Sri Sri Radha Govinda of the truth. I was no one worth noticing among the assembled Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis of 340 West 55th Street. 95% of the residents were twice-born direct disciples of Srila Prabhupada. They were Vaisnava and Vaisnavi brahmanas. I was neither Prabhupada disciple nor brahmana. I was allowed to learn the transcendental science of bhakti yoga in their association by hearing, chanting, observing, and practicing.

That was both a curse and a blessing for me. I was cursed because I missed the vapuh of His Divine Grace and could not receive diksa from the Founder Acharya and blessed because, from the beginning of my attempt at spiritual life, I had to depend primarily on Srila Prabhupada's vani – his original books and his transcendental sound vibrations. His transcendental books brought me to his skyscraper temple.

*In Caitanya-caritamrta, Srila Prabhupada writes of his spiritual master, "I still consider His Divine Grace to be always present with me by his vani, his words. There are two ways of association – by vani and by vapuh. Vani means words, and vapuh means physical presence. Physical presence is sometimes appreciable and sometimes not, but vani continues to exist eternally. Therefore we must take advantage of the vani, not the physical presence. Bhagavad-gita, for example, is the vani of Lord Krishna. Although Krishna was personally present five thousand years ago and is no longer physically present from the materialistic point of view, Bhagavad-gita continues."*

This is another reason not to change Srila Prabhupada's books. You change the words, you spoil the vani. I believe this is the true purpose behind the unauthorized changes – to spoil, out of envy, the gift that Srila Prabhupada gave to the world. Srila Prabhupada gave the world the way back to home, back to Godhead. Put your faith in the original unchanged spiritually factual books of the Founder Acharya, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami.

It was also a blessing to be a nobody. I was able to observe, unnoticed in the background, the disciples of Srila Prabhupada in their day to day service

to His Divine Grace. Some things I witnessed were awe-inspiring and some not so much.

## THE GREAT KING.

In the first months of 1979 the Back to Godhead Magazine moved into the fourth floor of 340 West 55th Street. There was the requisite construction marathon prior to the arrival. I did not participate. I was already fully engaged in chanting 16 rounds of japa daily, attending the morning and evening programs, serving the sankirtana devotees in the book room, going out on daily harinama-sankirtana, washing pots and pans, and stealing shrikhand from the bhakta program.

There was a maintenance department under the auspices of the temple vice-president, Vakresvara Pandita dasa, which oversaw the project. I recall one time I was in the offices of the magazine to deliver a message. That was the only time I was involved in any way, shape or form with the BTG, other than reading every issue.

Along with the BTG came the “great king” or if you prefer “maharaja”, Jayadvaita Swami. Jayadvaita received his danda from Satsvarupa dasa Goswami.

It was the custom or tradition at the time to request any visiting swami or senior devotee to give class and or to lead kirtana. Apparently, at first, “his holiness” refused. Weeks of humble requests from the residents of Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira were unsuccessful.

There was a list of lecture and kirtana assignments posted regularly on the bulletin board outside of the temple room. Finally, after many more weeks of prostrated begging, there was Jayadvaita’s name on the list to lead a Mangala-arati.

Oh happy day!

There were many nice devotees in New York who led the assembled Vaisnavas in many enlivening kirtanas. I can not count how many times the kirtanas were so ecstatic and the devotees so immersed in the transcendental sound vibration of the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE – when the kirtana came to a close there was an audible

groan of disappointment from the devotees. The bliss of experiencing a taste of association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, through the congregational chanting of His holy names, had, at least temporarily, come to an end.

The blessed morning finally arrived. I was in the temple room extra early prior to Mangala arati. I wanted to secure a pair of whompers and I did. I was usually one of the first in the temple room for Mangala-arati. My consistent early presence led to my temporary service of taking attendance every morning. There were some residents, for whatever reason, who were arriving after the Deity doors opened. Their Lordships missed gazing upon those tardy effulgent faces first thing in the morning.

There I was, in my usual place, a few body spaces directly behind the microphone, out of respect for the senior devotees. Jayadvaita Swami, small karatalas in hand, took his place at the mike, surrounded by his god-brothers with karatalas and mrdangas. The sweet tinkling of bells sounded from behind the closed doors of the altars, triple conch shells blew thrice, the Deity doors opened, Their Lordships appeared and all the devotees offered obeisances.

The moment we all asked for had finally arrived.

Jayadvaita began to play the karatalas. One, two, three, one, two...one...one...one, two, three, one...one, two...one, two...long pause...one...one and a half...one, two...pause...

Wait a minute! What was going on? My whompers were stilled and I wanted SO MUCH TO WHOMP OUT!

The maharaja didn't keep a steady beat. He kept going but it was difficult for those he led to follow his disjointed cadence. Starting and stopping, speeding up and slowing down, pausing...Oh my Krishna!

He led the chanting of the Mangala-arati prayers – Sri Sri Gurv-astaka, Srila Prabhupada Pranati, Panca-tattva mantra and the Hare Krishna maha mantra.

To compare the swami's chanting to the croaking of a frog would be an insult to all the unfortunate spirit souls transmigrating through the amphibian species of material bodies. Oh my Krishna!

The swami continued on and to their credit the assembled Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis followed as well as possible. There were no groans of disappointment as the kirtana concluded. It was more like an audible sigh of relief. Whew.

Chanting the holy names of Lord Hari is the yuga-dharma or recommended religious process for this fallen age of Kali yuga. It's called sankirtana-yagna. Yagna means sacrifice. Jayadvaita bestowed upon the resident sadhakas probably the greatest transcendental sacrifice of the year. That's one way of seeing it.

Here's another. As I mentioned earlier, the majority of the residents in attendance were brahmanas. It is said that austerity is the wealth of the brahmana. If that is true, Jayadvaita blessed the brahmanas with riches surpassed only by those Lord Krishna bestowed upon the brahmana Sudama Vipra.

The only way it could have been more austere is if yours truly were somehow allowed to lead kirtana. That never happened. Double whew.

JIV JAGO SLEEPYHEAD.

One morning after Mangala-arati, I was chanting japa in the lobby while sitting on the couch directly across from the elevator.

Diagonally across, on the right, was Govinda's Boutique. Next to the entrance of the store was my favorite big comfy chair. Seated in the chair that particular morning was Jayadvaita Swami also chanting japa. There were a few devotees milling about, softly chanting their rounds.

As I sat and attempted personal sravanam kirtanam, I noticed that Jayadvaita appeared to be dozing off. Everyone knows the symptoms – the eyelids droop, the hand in the bead bag stops moving and the chin slowly lowers toward the chest.

I was not alone in this observation. One of the swami's god-brothers went over to him and gently touched Jayadvaita on the shoulder to wake him. Jayadvaita opened his eyes, raised his head and said to his god-brother, "I'm not sleeping."

His god-brother walked away chanting his japa.

The swami began chanting japa. I continued my japa. The devotees chanted their japa.

More chanting of the holy names and a short time passed by. The swami became silent, his eyes closed, and his head went down. Another of his god-brothers who saw this, approached him, and softly touched Jayadvaita's shoulder. Jayadvaita opened his eyes, raised his head and said to his god-brother, "I'm not sleeping."

This god-brother stepped away and resumed his japa.

The swami began chanting japa. I continued my japa. The devotees chanted their japa.

After a few more minutes "his holiness" showed all the signs of being under the influence of tamo-guna once again. Another of Jayadvaita's god-brothers approached and touched the maharaja on the shoulder. Jayadvaita opened his eyes, raised his head, and testily snapped at the third god-brother who had the temerity to disturb him, "I'm not sleeping!"

The swami got up from the comfy chair in a huff, headed for the stairs directly across from him, and left the first floor to perform his "meditation" elsewhere.

To be fair, Jayadvaita was fully engaged as the senior editor of the Back to Godhead Magazine. He also was fully engaged in a boorish repugnant offensive and ultimately unsuccessful search for faults in the transcendental words of his spiritual master.

You could say he was giving Srila Prabhupada's Krishna consciousness movement two faces for the price of one.

YOU CAN BECOME GOD.

On April 22, 1979 I was initiated by Satsvarupa dasa Goswami and given the spiritual name Jagannatha dasa. My elder brother Lawrence was the only family member in attendance. My neighborhood friend Thomas "Tommy" Viola also attended. My brother took some photos of the event.

After the fire sacrifice I was congratulated by some of the devotees with whom I associated on a daily basis. I received gifts from some, which I still

have and will always treasure, along with other items, or remnants if you prefer, which I have saved from 340 West 55th and also treasure.

In the company of a small group of devotees, one Srila Prabhupada disciple, Visnu Gada prabhu, speaking facetiously to me and as it turned out, somewhat presciently, said, "Perhaps the sastra is wrong. You can become God. When you take sannyasa you will be Jagannatha Svami!" We all laughed.

Some weeks later I went out on harinama sankirtana with a small group of temple devotees. There were only about a dozen of us chanting and dancing on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. On this sunny afternoon we were accompanied by Jayadvaita Swami.

As usual we would march for a few blocks, chanting the holy names along the way, and then stop on a corner and line up side by side to chant and dance and distribute prasadam popcorn or sweets with invitation/mantra cards before moving on. At one point we stopped at one of the corners that were acoustically favorable to enhancing the spiritual sound vibrations. I was at one end of the line playing karatalas.

Jayadvaita was preaching to a passerby while the harinama party, guess what, chanted the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE. For some reason the swami approached me and requested that I hold his danda for a moment while he preached.

I put my karatalas in my vest pocket and took his danda in my right hand. There I was swaying back and forth with the devotees chanting and dancing with a danda.

Jayadvaita looked over at me a few times to be sure his danda was in good hands. I never let it touch the ground and returned it to him immediately upon request.

For a few illusory moments I was Jagannatha Svami!





## CHAPTER 18

### TILAKA AND THE DUST OF VRINDAVANA.

Every year the devotees would make pilgrimage to Sridhama Mayapura for the Gaura Purnima festival. I have not been so blessed in this lifetime. However, when the devotees returned from pilgrimage in 1979 they carried with them pounds of gopichandana or tilaka.

*"Tilaka is essential for devotees both for purification and protection. Furthermore, it is a beautiful decoration that declares to the world the identity of the wearer as a devotee of Visnu. When people see devotees wearing tilaka they are reminded of Krsna and are thus purified...various kinds of earth are sanctioned by scripture. Most Gaudiya Vaisnavas use gopichandana – a yellow clay sold in Vrindavana and Navadvipa... (A Beginner's Guide to Krishna Consciousness, by Bhakti Vikasa Swami)*

The devotees also brought voluminous sacks filled with the holy dust of Vrindavana Dhama.

*"As soon as he entered the boundary of Vrindavana, he saw the footprints of the cows and Lord Krishna's footprints, impressed with the signs of His sole, the flag, trident, thunderbolt and lotus flower. Upon seeing the footprints of Krishna, Akrura immediately jumped down from the chariot, out of respect. He became overwhelmed with all the symptoms of ecstasy;*

*he wept, and his body trembled. Out of extreme jubilation upon seeing the dust touched by the lotus feet of Krishna, Akrura fell flat on his face and began to roll on the ground.*

*"Akrura's journey to Vrindavana is exemplary. One who intends to visit Vrindavana should follow the ideal footsteps of Akrura and always think of the pastimes and activities of the Lord. As soon as one reaches the boundary of Vrindavana, he should immediately smear the dust of Vrindavana over his body without thinking of his material position and prestige." (Krishna Book, Volume One)*

*"Because Vrindavana dust is not different from Krishna, when you take a little dust from Vrindavana Dhama, it means you are taking the dust from Krishna's lotus feet." (Srila Prabhupada Tape 75/89)*

I received large amounts of both out of their mercy and some small remnants are still in my possession.

LORD KRISHNA'S GUMCHA.

During my term of transcendental service in His Divine Grace's bookroom there was an abhisheka for the small Sri Sri Radha Krishna Deities. I do not recall the exact date or occasion, all I recall is the bathing of the Deities in the temple room. It was my first time attending an abhisheka.

The temple room was packed with the assembled resident Vaisnavas. All the brahmacharis and all the matajis were in attendance to observe the blissful auspicious transcendental event.

I stood on the west side among the brahmacharis. The roped off abhisheka area was in the center in front of Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana. Having a tall body I could stand behind the senior devotees and still see clearly the wonderful bathing ceremony of Their Lordships.

The Vaisnavas are familiar with the ceremony, the brahmanas chanting slokas from the scriptures, the assorted articles used in the bathing, everyone chanting the holy names: HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

When Their Lordships were properly bathed and dried the brahmanas hid Their Lordships behind curtains to dress Them in new clothes. During this

phase one brahmana removed Lord Krishna's gumcha and without looking in any specific direction tossed it up into the air and above the crowd of devotees on the west side of the temple room.

The holy gumcha floated above the heads of the assembled Vaisnavas in the visual of my memory.

This pastime of my early attempt at devotional life in this lifetime always brings my consciousness back to another somewhat similar significant event nine years prior. The description of which may be useful as a minor example of dovetailing.

I am carried back to an evening in 1970.

I am on Second Avenue a few blocks uptown from 26 Second Avenue. I am standing outside of the Fillmore East waiting in line for a concert. My body is just fifteen years old. I notice a Hare Krishna devotee, a young man with shaved head and sikha, tilaka and dhoti distributing Back to Godhead magazines in the crowd. This is my second time in the presence of a disciple of Srila Prabhupada. The first time is just a year prior. At the time I do not make the connection. Although there is some attraction and curiosity I am too self-conscious and shy and I do not approach him nor does the prabhu approach me.

Once inside I am seated in the third row center and during the opening act the lead singer removes his tie and tosses it into the audience. Being young and athletic and excited at being at my first concert I use my inordinately lengthy arm and reach over and above the three rows of concert goers and snatch the tie out of the air. That mundane artifact is lost in time.

I return now to the current subject visual memory and my more physically mature and even more inordinately lengthy arm reached over and above the rows of devotees between me and the transcendental prize and souvenir and my hand grabbed it and my hand held on to it and I kept my spiritual treasure and never let it go.

LORD JAGANNATHA'S BRAHMANA'S THREAD.

Krishna's name Jagannatha means the Lord of the universe. Jagannatha dasa is the servant of the Lord of the universe.

Every morning after receiving the spiritual name Jagannatha dasa I would quietly chant the prayers in glorification of Lord Jaganntha in front of the Deities of Sri Jagannatha, Sri Baladeva and Lady Subhadra.

*krpa-paravarah sajala-jalada-sreni-ruciro*

*rama-vani-ramah sphurad-amala-pankeruha-mukhah*

*surendrair aradhyah sruti-gana-sikha-gita-carito*

*jagannathah svami nayana-patha-gami bhavatu me*

*Lord Jagannatha is an ocean of mercy and He is beautiful like a row of blackish rain clouds. He is the storehouse of bliss for Laksmi and Sarasvati, and His face is like a spotless full-blown lotus. He is worshiped by the best of demigods and sages, and His glories are sung by the Upanishads. May that Jagannatha Svami be the object of my vision. (Sri Jagannathastaka, Verse 4)*

A week or two after daily prayers before my Lords the brahmana pujari who served their Lordships every day, His Grace Krsnot Kirtana dasa (ACBSP), came to me. He was holding something in his closed right hand. He opened his hand revealing a brahmana thread. "Do you want Lord Jagannatha's brahmana's thread?" he asked. "Jai prabhu!" I replied. He placed the holy thread in my hand and it has never left my possession.

Those are some of my personal transcendental tangible evidences of the mercy of the Vaisnavas still in my possession.

## CHAPTER 19

### LEAVING SRILA PRABHUPADA'S BOOKROOM.

After losing my spot in the bookroom I was given another service. I was still spending part of the mornings helping to wash the pots and pans and the prasadam serving articles and utensils in Srimati Radharani's kitchen. There was a new preaching program just starting – Wednesday evening prasadam by invitation only.

To facilitate this new program first there had to be advertisements such as posters placed in windows of local health food establishments and vegetarian restaurants along with invitation cards. The main aim, as I was made to understand, was to attract a more spiritually inclined patron to the temple.

My self and Bhakta Mark, who was eventually initiated by Satsvarups dasa Goswami and given the spiritual name Matsyrupa dasa, were charged with this initial part of the program. Bhakta Mark performed the majority of this service, speaking with the owners of the various businesses, while I sulkily lagged along lamenting my loss of and hankering to return to my previous service.

Once that was accomplished to the satisfaction of authorities the actual prasadam serving and preaching on Wednesdays began. It became quite obvious from the start that the majority of those who came with their invitation cards were the free Sunday love feast regulars. They were there for the prasadam but there was no real expansion of newcomers to Krishna consciousness from this program. Perhaps there were a few first timers and that was fine. There is no loss or diminution in Krishna conscious endeavor. I was given the opportunity to preach and to serve prasadam and make advancement in that way. I was preaching to and serving prasadam to persons who had been associating with devotees for years but whose only interest was the free food. That aspect was a bit frustrating. I grudgingly surrendered to my new service mostly because I enjoyed serving Sri Sri Radha Govinda prasadam and all that entailed.

LEAVING SRI SRI RADHA GOVINDA MANDIRA AGAIN.

No! Not Again! I don't believe it. Believe it spirit soul. Are you not familiar with the conclusion of Lord Caitanya's Sri Siksastaka?

*"I know no one but Krishna as my Lord, and He shall remain so even if He handles me roughly by His embrace or makes me brokenhearted by not being present before me. He is completely free to do anything and everything, for He is always my worshipful Lord, unconditionally."*

Yes. I was sent back to the Hartford preaching center. It does not require a high IQ to predict my immature egotistical offensive reaction to once more being sent away, banished, in my estimation, from my comfortable arrangement, my kashipu.

I was on the mental and false-ego platform. I wasn't hearing or chanting properly. I was engrossed in hankering and lamenting and woe is me instead of accepting my situation as Srila Prabhupada's and Krishna's mercy on me to reform my bad habits and surrender to the process of sadhana – hearing and chanting and remembering the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

His Grace Kurma Rupa dasa was the president of Hartford temple. He was the humblest devotee I have ever met. He knew I was suffering from some mental and emotional negative reaction. He could see my intentional indifference to association with the residents of Hartford temple. Anyone could see my puny results of book distribution and laxmi points.

I always remember this one instruction he imparted to me. "Krishna will not put an impediment in your way that you cannot overcome. This same impediment will keep coming back until you fully realize your dependence on guru and Krishna." Yes.

## LEAVING THE FIELD OF PREACHING ACTIVITIES.

*“Prabhupada doesn’t overlook our offenses. That would be to neglect us. No. He cares for us like the sick children we are. We are far from perfect and hardly worthy of being called his sons, but Prabhupada loves us.*

*He has taught us that, like soldiers on a battlefield, we’re all subject to being knocked down, wounded, and even killed. When a comrade falls, we should rush to help him, knowing that each soldier is precious to the general. How often Srila Prabhupada has shed tears when Maya Devi snatched one of his soldiers! May the day never come when we rejoice to see a godbrother fall, eager to usurp his post or proud to esteem ourselves elevated by comparison.” (Vrindaban Days, by Hayagriva Dasa)*

We went out to distribute BTG’s in a local shopping center parking lot. I was riding in a vehicle with two fellow bhaktas. One prabhu was driving and I was in the back seat with the other prabhu. There was some sort of inimical relationship between the two prabhhus. First one would give some instruction to the other and then the other would correct the other and return his own instruction to the other prabhu. It was similar to watching a verbal tennis match as words went back and forth with increasing speed and rising audible volume. Soon the two prabhhus were yelling at each other. And I am trapped with the two insulting loudspeakers. Oh my Krishna!

Now my rascal mind was yelling at me. “What am I doing here? Why do I have to listen to these two nonsense rascals? Tell them to shut up before I explode! Arrrrgh! Get me out of here!”

Fortunately I was let out of the vehicle first, at one site, and the prabhhus drove off to another site. I immediately sat down on a bench in front of one of the stores and took out my japa beads and chanted softly to my self. The rest of my time there I sat and read the current edition of the BTG from cover to cover. I did no preaching except to my mind, no attempt at distributing literature and no attempt at collecting laxmi.

Eventually the time came for the prabhhus to return to my lot to take me back to the temple. I saw the vehicle pull into the parking lot. I was still sitting on the bench in front in plain sight. Both the prabhhus came out of the vehicle. They both walked within inches of me and both walked right past me without seeing me. I sat there silently and watched them return

again, walking right past me again, not seeing me again, they both got back in the vehicle and left.

Yes. I had little desire to be seen and they had little desire to see me. Maya.

After they left I got up from my seat and began my walk along the highway back to the temple. I arrived at 84 Silver Lane after midnight. In the parking area I noticed a mobile home. I did not want to disturb anyone so I climbed into the back seat of the vehicle I rode in during the previous morning and took rest. Fortunately it was not too cold. I awoke for Mangala Arati but stayed outside the temple chanting japa until the chanting inside was completed and then I went inside.

To my surprise Niranjana dasa was in attendance. He brought me into the mobile home he was traveling with and had a long talk with me. He ascertained that I had no desire to remain in Hartford and reluctantly agreed to return me to Sri Sri Radha Govinda.

BLOOPED.

The origin and meaning of the term "bloop":

*Swamiji's lectures often included the metaphor of falling back into the material illusory ocean or maya. He would gesture as if throwing a stone.*

*One day Vince got confused and yelled, "I don't get it. It's just another religion, another sectarian cult."*

*He stomped out of the temple.*

*Brahmananda and I looked at each other, and I said, "He fell back into the ocean of maya."*

*Brahmananda made the gesture of throwing a stone and said, "Bloop."*

*After that, every time a devotee left we'd say, "Ah, he's blooped." Or if someone was misunderstanding we'd say, "I think he's gonna bloop." Or when someone didn't show up for a few weeks, we'd say, "He's probably blooped." Bloop became our word for leaving.*

*Some weeks later the Swami asked, "Where's that boy Vince?"*

*Brahmananda said, "Oh, he blooped."*

*Prabhupada slowly turned to Brahmananda.*

*"Bloop? What is this bloop?"*

*Brahmananda gulped and meekly said, "Well, you've been explaining how if we do not catch onto the lotus feet of Krishna, again we will fall into the ocean of material illusion. So, like a stone falling into water, it makes that sound – bloop."*

*Prabhupada paused, considered the word, and said, "Well then, if he has blooped, what can be done?" (BLAZING SADHUS or Never Trust A Holy Man Who Can't Dance, by Achyutananda Das)*

Now I was back in 340 West 55th Street. I was moved far from my former room near the sankirtana devotees. I shared a room with Partha Dhanurdara dasa who was engaged in service in Srimati Radharani's kitchen under the guidance of Visnu Gada dasa. My duties were divided between kitchen service and counting room seva but it was mostly serving in the kitchen.

Something was missing – my desire to serve the Vaisnavas and Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Radha Govinda.

It is that simple. I lost any miniscule faith in the holy names that I may have had.

*"Your sinful karma is like a revolving fan," Swamiji explains. "By chanting Hare Krishna, you turn it off. The fan may still revolve for a while after being turned off, but since it is getting no more juice, it will soon stop."*

*"When it stops, does it stop for good?" someone asks.*

*"You know where the switch is," Swamiji says. "You can always turn it back on." (The Hare Krishna Explosion by Hayagriva Dasa)*

Thinking feeling and willing. I was thinking of leaving. I was feeling I wanted to leave. I was willing to leave. I left. In the middle of the night, like a thief in the night, I silently snuck out of Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira of 340 West 55th Street and returned to my old neighborhood in Queens.

I stayed with my elder brother and attempted to return to my former life. I tried to associate with my former friends. They looked at me and reacted to

me as if I were a strange diseased alien from some distant planet who did not speak their language. Their association was tasteless and void of any enjoyment. I was miserable.

After two weeks or so of plugging in my fan someone came to the home of my elder brother. The doorbell rang from downstairs and my brother went down. I looked out the door and saw a tall slender man wearing dark clothes and what appeared to be a large black cowboy hat on his head. I did a double take and realized it was Niranjana dasa looking for me to bring me back to my spiritual home. I was amused at first because I never saw him dressed in karmi clothes and then I was ashamed of my nonsense behavior.

Soon I was in the Port Authority Bus Terminal. I went there because I was too ashamed to go directly to 340 West 55th Street. I knew there would be book distributors preaching in the terminal. I approached one and asked him to call the temple to please send someone to take me back. Shortly thereafter Niranjana arrived. He punched me hard in my arm and then brought me back to the temple.

When I was back in the temple there was the same reaction from the devotees that I felt when I tried to return to my former neighborhood associates. The devotees looked at me and reacted to me as if I were a strange diseased alien from some distant planet who did not speak their language. I was shunned. I was exiled as far from my former associates as possible. I was given a room with no room mate. The devotee who shared the room didn't live there. I don't know where the prabhu lived. He was in the room once while I was there and that was a brief silent moment.

This was the lowest point in my devotional life. I felt abandoned by devotees and non-devotees alike. I was isolated from any personal devotional association but I was back in Srila Prabhupada's and Sri Sri Radha Govinda's home. I was still able to chant the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE. I was still allowed to attend the morning and evening programs. I was still allowed to wash the pots and pans and at least allowed to serve the Vaisnavas again.

When I was assigned my new room I was shown a locker to use. It was old and rusted, dirty, dingy and musty inside. There were some decrepit black

plastic bags and papers on the bottom covered in grime. Once I was settled in I took up the task to clean up my new home within Krishna's home. I made up my mind to make the best use of what I was given, however apparently humble, by the mercy of the Supreme Lord.

Once I changed my attitude I started to feel a little happiness and gratitude for my situation. So I pulled out the filthy bags and papers from the locker and the most wonderful thing happened.

What I found underneath, apparently covered in a mountain of dirt, was a small image of Sri Nathji in a glass and wooden frame, Lord Krishna lifting Govardhana Hill, which I have held on to, to this day.



*"Let Krishna, who is so kind, beautiful and merciful, protect us. When angry Indra sent torrents of rain, accompanied by showers of ice blocks and high wind, He immediately took compassion upon us and saved us and our families, cows and valuable possessions by picking up the Govardhana Hill, just like a child picks up a mushroom. He saved us so wonderfully. May He continue to mercifully glance over us and our cows. May we live peacefully under the protection of wonderful Krishna." (Krishna Book, Volume One, Chapter 26, Wonderful Krishna)*

## CHAPTER 20

### LIKE A ROLLING STONE.

*Prithu: We had a gorgeous temple that was the ISKCON headquarters in Germany. But at that time, Krishna consciousness in Germany was in shambles. We had had some trouble with the German government. Jayatirtha went to Srila Prabhupada and said, "I think we won't be able to maintain this temple. It would be better to split up into smaller centers." But Prabhupada liked this temple. He appreciated the Deities there and the location. When he heard Jayatirtha's idea he said, "Even if your child has been born deaf and blind, does it mean you kill it?" We were shocked that he said that. Then he became angry. He said, "does it mean you kill it?" Jayatirtha said, "No, no, no." Prabhupada said, "Don't be a rolling stone. Become determined." (Memories Anecdotes of a Modern Day Saint by Siddhanta Dasa)*

I was feeling my transcendental oats after a few weeks of immersing myself in the devotional swing of things in the temple when I had a meeting with the New York GBC Adi Kesava Swami. I visited him in his room. This was the first time I was ever in his room.

He wanted to know how I was doing since returning to Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira. During this discussion I mentioned my time in the Navy. When I was stationed far from home I did well but when I was stationed near home I would over stay my liberties and leaves and consequently get into trouble with authorities.

Adi Kesava expressed the opinion that maybe I would do better if I were away from New York for a while. He said perhaps I would like to visit the temple in Puerto Rico. The weather was always warm the sky sunny the devotees friendly and it was an ocean away from New York. I did not disagree and soon I was on my way out of Srila Prabhupada's skyscraper temple once more.

Of all the places on this planet where I have lived, the island of Puerto Rico was the most beautiful. I lived in a temple of Krishna high up in the hills in Trujillo Alto, Gurabo. Fresh air and unfiltered sunshine. The temperature was never too high and the humidity was also never uncomfortable. In the mornings and evenings I would associate with the devotees engaged in

sravanam, kirtanam, Vishnu smaranam and deity worship. I chanted the holy names - HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

On Sunday, November 4, 1979, to the great joy of the assembled vaisnavas, Their Lordships Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, the original worshipable Deities of ISKCON Puerto Rico, were joined in residence by Their Lordships Sri Sri Krsna Balarama and Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Syamasundara. For two weeks prior, the devotees in Puerto Rico engaged in a 24/7 installation marathon. Except for the book distributors, all the matajis and prabhujis in the temple devoted every waking hour to repair, renovate, expand and improve the temple room in order to accommodate all of Their Lordships. I was one of those fortunate few who were allowed to contribute their spiritual elbow grease during the fortnight of intense service.

I spent most of my days serving Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON Puerto Rico in the fields digging ditches, with pick and shovel, for irrigation and water and sewage lines. My service was occasionally interrupted by stinging attacks from colonies of fire ants. Days spent under the tropical sun changed my skin from ghost white to golden brown. My body went from skin and bones to muscle. REAL MUSCLE. The muscle, the strength, earned by hard healthy austere ecstatic service. I would watch the clouds on top of the mountains as they floated outward across the island, rolling over the roof of the tropical jungle and down to the shore. At night there was the serenade of the coqui. There was always raw fresh milk and cream, fresh fruits and vegetables for prasadam. I slept on a wooden bed, no cushion, no pillow, in a converted chicken-coop in the open air – just a roof and concrete floor with open concrete walls. It was Spartan and natural and beautiful and transcendental – simple living and high thinking.

While I was living in the temple in Puerto Rico the smiling bhaktin from New York moved into the brahmacarini ashrama. Eventually we married and left the island soon after. With the assistance of my mother and father we moved to Miami Beach and attended the Miami Beach temple on Sundays. We returned to New York at the end of 1980. We had our first son Parasurama. Sometime in 1981 I returned to 340 West 55th Street.

I was heartbroken to find my former transcendental home empty. Two devotees were pushing a large flatbed dolly loaded with light fixtures through the front doors. I was told the temple had been sold.

The Deities and the devotees had moved. Sri Sri Gaura Nitai went to Towaco, New Jersey. Sri Sri Radha Govinda were nearby on 7th Avenue. Lord Jagannatha, Lord Baladeva and Lady Subhadra moved to Lake Huntington, New York. I have no knowledge of the whereabouts of Sri Nathji.

That year my wife and son and I moved to the Hare Krishna commune New Purusottama Ksetra in Lake Huntington. We had the great fortune of living next door to one of Srila Prabhupada's earliest, very advanced and very dear disciples, and a very talented Krishna conscious artist - her grace Saradiya devi dasi. I also had the great fortune to engage in some small service for and get some association of Achyutananda Swami.

Eventually I took up devotional service in Lady Subhadra's kitchen. Among the duties involved I cooked breakfast and part of the lunch prasadam (dahl and rice) every day for the adult residents and the children of the gurukula. I also engaged in my favorite service of washing the pots, pans and serving containers.



Bhaktin Maria and Parasurama, Lake Huntington 1981

## EPILOGUE

So that is all I have to say on the subject of Srila Prabhupada's skyscraper temple, and my time in residence there, in this book.

I did not write this book to make money. I do not see any possibility of this being a materially profitable venture. I wrote this for Srila Prabhupada's glorification and my spiritual purification. I pray this humble offering is accepted by the vaisnavas and vaisnavis and Srila Prabhupada and Sri Krishna that I may make some advancement in Krishna consciousness.

I must mention here so that there is no confusion of my spiritual status. Years ago I renounced my connection with Satsvarupa dasa Goswami who gave me diksa initiation in 1979. I wish him well in his devotional service and have no ill will towards him. He received unlimited mercy as one of Srila Prabhupada's first disciples.

As I said at the beginning of this book Srila Prabhupada was calling me to take shelter of his lotus feet since 1969. At the beginning of my residence in his skyscraper temple I was under the impression that *I was his disciple*. I have placed my self under the shelter of Srila Prabhupada's vani. That is where I belong.

*"Disciplic succession does not mean one has to be directly a disciple of a particular person. The conclusions which we have tried to explain in our Bhagavad-gita are the same as those conclusions of Arjuna. Arjuna accepted Krishna as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and we also accept the same truth under the disciplic succession of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Things equal to the same thing are equal to one another. This is an axiomatic truth." (Letter to Kirtanananda 1/25/1969)*

*"Disciplic succession does not always mean that one has to be initiated officially. Disciplic succession means to accept the disciplic conclusion." (Letter to Dinesh 10/31/1969)*

*"So far personal association with the Guru is concerned, I was only with my Guru Maharaja four or five times, but I have never felt any separation. I have never left his association, not even for a moment, because I am following his instructions. There are some of my Godbrothers here in India who had constant personal association with Guru Maharaja, but who are*

*neglecting his orders. This is just like the bug who is sitting on the lap of the king. He may be very puffed up by his position, but all he can succeed in doing is biting the king. Personal association is not so important as association through service." (Letter to Satadhanya 2/20/1972)*

*"Initiation is a formality. If you are serious, that is real initiation. If you have understood this Krishna philosophy and if you have decided that you will take Krishna consciousness seriously and preach the philosophy to others, that is your initiation. My touch is simply a formality. It is your determination. That is initiation." (Back to Godhead Magazine)*

*"If you think of me and work for me, then I am in your heart. If you love somebody he is in your heart. It is common thing, everyone understands it." (Letter to Jadurani 9/4/1972)*

*"The fact is, Prabhupada is still as much with us as ever, actually more so. Before Prabhupada left the planet, devotees were under the illusion that Prabhupada was present where he was living. Now the devotees are able to appreciate Prabhupada the way Prabhupada wanted to be appreciated, in his instructions. He is factually there in his books. Anyone who takes up the books wholeheartedly is a disciple of Prabhupada, whether he ever saw Prabhupada or not. If anyone asks such a person: 'Who is your guru?' he can say in all honesty, 'My guru is His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada because I have accepted his instructions as my life and soul.'" (The Guru Business by Sulochana Dasa)*

*"Generally a spiritual master who constantly instructs a disciple in spiritual science becomes his initiating spiritual master later on." (Caitanya-caritamrta Adi-Lila, Chapter 1 Text 35)*

At times I believe that I have been cursed due to some offense or many offenses to the vaisnava devotees of the Lord. Five thousand years ago the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Krsna appeared on this planet and performed His transcendental pastimes and I missed Him. Five hundred years ago the Supreme Personality of Godhead Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu appeared on this planet and performed His transcendental pastimes and I missed Him. Sri Krsna's pure devotee, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, a nitya-siddha jagat-guru, performed his transcendental pastimes

on this planet, and I was living in my current material body on this planet during his manifest presence here, and I missed him!

I have been forced to transmigrate through 8,400,000 species of life all over the universe suffering diseased conditioned lives due to my karma, my ignorance, my faults, my sins, my offenses to the Lord and His devotees. It is all on me so even if I may have been cursed I have to own the cause of my fallen state of being.

Even though I may have missed the Supreme Lord and His pure devotee due to my misdeeds I am not without hope.

I am part and parcel of the Supreme Lord. I am an eternal spirit soul part and parcel of the Supreme Soul. I cannot be vanquished. My goal of one day realizing my true purpose in life - unalloyed loving service to the Supreme Lord - similarly cannot be vanquished. I learned this transcendental knowledge from the original unspoiled soul-satisfying spiritually purifying words of ISKCON Founder Acharya A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami while I was a resident of Srila Prabhupada's skyscraper temple. I must simply follow in the footsteps of the previous acaryas, and utilize all my time, life after life, cent per cent, serving the vaisnavas and Krishna by spreading the chanting of the holy names - HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

Then, and only then, the Lord may recognize me and send His bona fide representative so I may inquire submissively about the science of self-realization and perform loving devotional service to my guru's lotus feet.

It may take more unlimited lifetimes in the material world engaging in devotional service before finally meeting my gurudeva; face to lotus feet. Although it may be performed in the material world, lifetime after lifetime serving the Supreme Lord and His devotees is not suffering. There is no difference between limitless lifetimes of vaisnava seva in the material world and attaining Vaikuntha. For the truly surrendered soul it is all bliss because it is performed for the pleasure of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is unalloyed loving devotional service to Bhagavan Sri Krsna.

Srila Prabhupada said so and he is a Vaikuntha man.

*"There is no difference between the kingdom of God and the devotional service of the Lord. Since both of them are on the absolute plane, to be engaged in the transcendental loving service of the Lord is to have attained the spiritual kingdom." (Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 2, Text 72, purport excerpt)*

**All glories, all glories, all glories to His Divine Grace  
Srila A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada!**

## HOMAGE #1



For Bhaktin Maria,

You are always in my heart and in my prayers.

At the age of sixteen Bhaktin Maria became a resident of Srila Prabhupada's skyscraper temple in Manhattan.

That is where I first met her. The first time that I saw her I knew I would marry her. I even prayed to let her be my wife. We never spoke to each other the entire time that we lived at Radha Govinda Mandir. Except for one time when I was serving out the Sunday Love Feast and I served her and she smiled at me. That was our only contact.

Not a single word, not even a haribol. Just a smile.

And then she was gone.

I didn't know where and I wasn't about to go beyond my little universe known as the Bhakta Program and ask any authority what happened to that cute little bhaktin. I had a good idea of what kind of "YOU ARE IN MAYA!" speech I could expect.

Eventually I was sent by the GBC to the temple in the hills of Puerto Rico.

After a few months of living and breathing the daily life of the humble sadhaka there was a Sunday Love Feast. And the bhaktin of my prayers appeared. It was her. Bhaktin Maria.

Somehow or other she made her way up into the hills of Gurabo to the temple with the help of a relative. The relative said to her "You should stay here now because your husband is inside the temple." She moved in.

After a few days, when it became apparent that Bhaktin Maria was staying, I made up my mind (friend or enemy?) that I would not waste the opportunity that Krishna had arranged. The first chance that I had, one early morning after the Mangala-arati, I approached her on the road leading to the temple and spoke with her. She was very shy and would not even look me in the face. I knew right then and there and so did she. We were inseparable after that first time conversation.

We were married for 21 years and we were blessed by Krishna with 3 beautiful children.

Bhaktin Maria loved the Vaisnavas and Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Panca Tattva and Sri Sri Radha Govinda and Their Lordships Jagannatha, Baladeva and Lady Subhadra.

Mother Maria was and is a devotee of the Supreme Lord. Mother Maria was a loving wife and mother and grandmother. We served the Lord together as husband and wife for over 20 years. I beg Bhaktin Maria's forgiveness for all my offenses and mistakes and my just plain ignorance.

She passed away in April 2017.

Bhaktin Maria chanted the holy names of the Lord: HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE.

Bhaktin Maria served the Vaisnavas and Srila Prabhupada and the Deities in many different temples. She performed loving devotional service in the Maha temple at 340 West 55th Street in Manhattan, New York City, and in the ISKCON temples in Puerto Rico, Miami Beach, Lake Huntington, Gita Nagari, Brooklyn and 26 2nd Avenue.

Remembrance from a vaisnava -

"I remember her from the hilltop in Gurabo, Puerto Rico and Brooklyn, New York. She chanted and heard the holy name, heard the Srimad Bhagavata, tasted prasada, worshipped Tulasi. Surely a human life spent in activities that will help the soul get closer to Bhagavan's lotus feet in the future."

*One can understand the Supreme Personality as He is only by devotional service. And when one is in full consciousness of the Supreme Lord by such devotion, he can enter into the kingdom of God. (Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 18, Text 55)*

Vaya con Krishna, mi amor.



## HOMAGE #2



In the transcendental words of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu; *"Anyone who takes to devotional service is exalted..."*

At the recent New York City Ratha Yatra I heard the sad words that a friend and godbrother had left his body.

His Grace Akrura dasa brahmachari received diksa and brahminical initiations from Satsvarupa dasa Goswami in the late 1970's and early 1980's. He was the younger brother of His Grace Lokamangala dasa brahmachari (ACBSP), the well-known ISKCON devotee actor famous for his wonderful portrayals of King Kamsa and Ravana. Their mother was a regular at the Free Sunday Love Feasts at Srila Prabhupada's skyscraper temple 340 West 55th Street.

A VISIT TO AKRURA PRABHU'S HOME IN MARCH 2008

[My journal entries for that day] –

Today March 20, 2008

I went to Akrura's today.

I got there at about 10 am and we went for a 6 mile walk. Then we went to his apartment. I got darshan of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai and Their Lordships Jagannatha, Baladeva and Lady Subhadra. Akrura prabhu prepared some bhoga and gave me the honor of offering to the Deities and then we took with relish some baked potato, eggplant parmesan, green salad and blueberry halavah. After, we looked at his devotional photos which he allowed me to take home with me to scan. We spoke Krishna katha for a few hours and then I took the train home.

Akrura said –

When I visited Akrura prabhu he told me it took him a long time to surrender. He would visit the Henry Street temple where Lokamangala (his brother) lived and not take prasadam at all. When the devotees would try to put tilak on his forehead when he entered the temple, as was the custom at that time, (What happened to that custom?) he would avoid them. He had many chances to see Prabhupada but would not go to see him because he was afraid that if Prabhupada looked him in the eyes he would become a devotee. He told me of working on the first NY Ratha Yatra carts. He would go from 9am to 9pm everyday for so many weeks. He received no pay but he loved to go everyday and do devotional service. He served with Jayananda prabhu and Damodara prabhu and Jivadhara prabhu and others. He would sometimes drive a fork lift. He said he couldn't wait to get up in the morning and help build Lord Jagannatha's chariots.

He told me that Niranjana prabhu would ask him again and again to stay overnight but for years he would refuse. Until one day Niranjana prabhu told him that this was the last time he would ask him and Akrura prabhu finally said yes. He told me how Bhagavatananda prabhu would come to the restaurant and buy prasadam and sit on the floor in the middle of the restaurant wearing his wild clothes and big afro and chant mantras over the prasadam and Akrura prabhu would have to gently convince him to please sit at a table like everyone else. He told me of having to kick out K dasa and A dasa for stealing money from the restaurant. How he became like a madman, he was so upset that they would steal from Krishna, that in spite of both those devotees having experience with martial arts, and at great risk to his own well being, he was fearless and got in their faces and made them leave immediately.

Dear Devotees,

Soon all of us will leave this temporal reality. We are all individual spirit souls with unique personalities. Although some individuals tend to be alone it does not necessarily mean they are anti-social. Please don't forget your friends, old and new, and loved ones. No matter how near or far. Please send some transcendental sound vibrations their way. With the exception of Guru and Krishna in the heart, Akrura prabhu was alone when he left his body.

NO ONE, ESPECIALLY AN ASPIRING VAISNAVA, SHOULD LEAVE THEIR BODY ALONE, IN ANONIMITY, BEREFT OF ANY DEVOTIONAL ASSOCIATION. IT'S NOT MERCIFUL. WE ARE STRIVING FOR MERCY FOR ALL THE CONDITIONED SOULS. ISN'T IT? SHAME ON ME FOR NOT STAYING IN TOUCH.

I am not saying I was Akrura's best or closest god-brother and friend. He was my best friend/god-brother. We were trained up together in the Bhakta Program in Srila Prabhupada's skyscraper temple. We chanted the holy names - HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE - together in the temple room. We shared trips to Gita Nagari Ratha Yatras over the years. He visited my home in Queens and I visited his home in the Bronx. He was a kind uncle to my sons.

We last associated at the 2015 New York Ratha Yatra. We sat together on the grass in Washington Square Park and honored Jagannatha prasadam and it was just like it always was – Krishna Katha – funny and serious and a transcendently happy place to be.

I am so sad that Akrura prabhu has disappeared from my vision. So sad. I am so happy that he is possibly closer now, if not there already, to the Kingdom of God. So happy.

*"Always chanting My glories, endeavoring with great determination, bowing down before Me, these great souls perpetually worship Me with devotion." (Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 9, Text 14)*



### HOMAGE #3



*Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu asked, "Of all kinds of distress, what is the most painful?"*

*Sri Ramananda Raya replied, "Apart from separation from the devotee of Krishna, I know of no unbearable unhappiness." (Caitanya-caritamrta, Madhya-lila, Chapter 8, Verse 248)*

On April 25, 2015 there was a gathering of Vaisnavas at the home of Garbhodakasayi Visnu prabhu and Mother Joan in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York City. The purpose of this meeting was to remember and to celebrate and to pay homage to a very dear disciple of ISKCON Founder Acharya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada. The devotees joined together to offer their heart-felt obeisances and deep gratitude and to share loving devotional exchanges in honor of His Grace Urjasvat dasa and to show their appreciation for his lifetime of enthusiastic Krishna conscious devotional service.

Urjasvat prabhu touched the lives of so many devotees around the world. He is best known for leading ecstatic, spiritually-surcharged kirtanas in praise of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna. His voice and chanting style is unique and unforgettable. When Urjasvat prabhu is chanting, you do not even have to see him, all you have to do is hear that inimitable voice, and you know who is leading the kirtana. If for some reason you are not in the temple room and you recognize that sweet, one-of-a-kind, transcendental sound vibration, you immediately realize that it is Urjasvat prabhu and you make haste to join in on the always fired-up chanting and dancing that his humble leadership inspires in everyone.

Urjasvat prabhu may no longer be physically present with us but he will always be available to associate with us within our hearts and in our minds as long as we maintain the memories of his nectarean association.

Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur said – *“He reasons ill who tells that Vaishnavas die, when thou art living still in sound! The Vaishnavas die to live, and living try to spread the holy name around!”*

Urjasvat prabhu spent practically his entire life performing Harinama Sankirtana. He constantly traveled and preached. His life is an example of enthusiastic devotional service. He spread that enthusiasm to chant the Holy Names, to serve the desire of the pure devotee, Srila Prabhupada, and to advance in Krishna consciousness, to everyone he met. Just seeing him reminded you of Krishna. That is the highest praise that there is for a devotee. Whenever and wherever you met him, in whatever the circumstance, you immediately knew that you were in the presence of a Vaisnava, a servant of Lord Vishnu, Krishna. He was always decorated with tilaka. When you see a devotee decorated that way you are reminded of Krishna and you become purified. He always carried his big bead bag with his japa-mala. He was always chanting Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. He was always clean and neat and first class. He was always happy. He was and is an acarya in so many ways. He exhibited so many qualities of the truly surrendered soul.

*Nectar of Devotion, Krishna consciousness is all auspicious, Page 7 –*

*Furthermore, a person engaged in Krishna consciousness, acting in devotional service, can develop all the good qualities that are generally found in the demigods.*

*It is said by Sukadeva Gosvami in the 5th Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, 18th chapter, 12th verse, "My dear king, persons who have unflinching faith in Krishna and are without any duplicity can develop all the good qualities of the demigods. On account of a devotee's high grade of Krishna consciousness even the demigods like to live with him, and therefore it can be understood that the qualities of the demigods have developed within his body.*

*Nectar of Instruction, Text 3, Page 37 –*

*...all good qualities automatically develop in the character of a devotee. No extraneous endeavor is needed. As confirmed by Srimad Bhagavatam (5.18.12), all the good qualities of the demigods manifest progressively in one who has developed pure devotional service. Because a devotee is not interested in any material activity, he does not become materially contaminated. He is immediately situated on the platform of transcendental life.*

Numerous transcendental qualities were manifest in Urjasvat prabhu. He was kind to all. He had no enemies. He was truthful, equal to all, without fault. He was magnanimous, mild, clean, unattached to material possessions. He was and is an exemplary devotee of Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai, Sri Sri Radha-Govinda and Their Lordships Sri Jagannatha, Sri Baladeva and Lady Subhadra. He is someone who took up the order of his spiritual master and made it his life and soul, his purpose in life. He engaged all his senses, all his time, all his energy and encouraged everyone to please Guru and Krsna.

*"Whatever action is performed by a great man, common men follow in his footsteps. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues." (Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Chapter 3, Text 21)*

Urjasvat prabhu was a many-sided disciple of Srila Prabhupada. As mentioned above, he was famous for leading ecstatic kirtanas. He was also an excellent cook. He knew the Krishna conscious philosophy backwards and forwards and gave purifying lectures on Srimad Bhagavatam, Caitanya-

caritamrta and Srimad Bhagavad-gita As It Is. He was temple president simultaneously in both Puerto Rico and Trinidad. At one time he was recommended for Sannyasa. When he wasn't chanting Hare Krishna and Gaura Hari Bol and Jai Jagannatha he was immersed in studying parampara literature. In his own words he stated that he prayed daily to Srila Prabhupada to please remove envy from his heart so that he could love Srila Prabhupada more and more. I believe his prayers were successful. We should all follow his example of devotion to Srila Prabhupada and Krishna.

*Offering gifts in charity, accepting charitable gifts, revealing one's mind in confidence, inquiring confidentially, offering prasada and accepting prasada are the six symptoms of love shared by one devotee and another. (Sri Upadesamrta, Text 4)*

There were so many wonderful devotees in attendance that paid tribute to Urjasvat prabhu. Devotees from so many varied walks of life spent a blissful evening chanting the holy names Hare, Krishna and Rama in kirtana and bhajan. There were some videos of Urjasvat prabhu leading kirtana and giving class. Everyone shared stories of their personal pastimes and enlivening experiences with Urjasvat prabhu. His godbrothers Mahavirya and Bhumipati and Bushara prabhush spoke of him in the early days of Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON. Others of our spiritual family who joined after Urjasvat prabhu was already a veteran of many years of service spoke of how they were trained by him and how he was an example of a truly humble, surrendered soul who had full faith in the process of Krishna consciousness. Some devotees were too humble and shy to speak. Some were too overcome with spiritual emotion. He was such a positive influence on the devotional life of everyone present and everyone was honored and grateful to have been blessed to receive his transcendental association.

There was a beautiful altar set up with garlanded deities of Radha-Krishna and Gaura-Nitai. There was a photo of Urjasvat prabhu with a sweet garland also. The evening concluded with a maha kirtana with the congregational chanting of the holy names - HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE - while arati was offered by Parvati devi dasi to Srila Prabhupada and Krishna and to Urjasvat prabhu. Of course, after the chanting and dancing, there was a scrumptious prasadam feast prepared by Mahavirya prabhu. All the devotees enjoyed their spiritual senses by

honoring Krishna prasada and basking in the afterglow of wonderful sadhu-sanga, Krishna-katha and transcendental glorification of Srila Prabhupada's very dear disciple, His Grace Urjasvat dasa prabhu.

He  
reasons  
ill  
who  
says  
Vaisnavas  
die  
when  
thou  
art  
living  
still  
in  
sound!

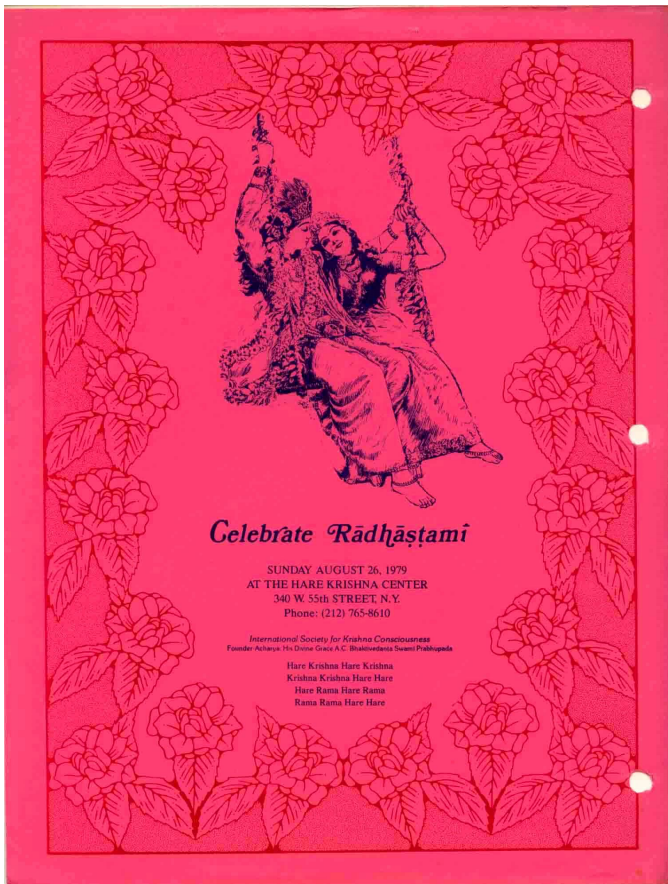


The  
Vaisnavas  
die  
to  
live,  
and  
living  
try  
to  
spread  
the  
HOLY  
NAME  
around!

## ADDENDUM #1 REMNANTS



Lord Jagannatha's Brahmana's Thread





Lord Krishna's Gumcha

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HARE HARE  
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## ADDENDUM #2 THE PROCESS...MARCH 1978

### THE PROCESS FOR CARRYING OUT SRILA PRABHUPADA'S DESIRES FOR FUTURE INITIATIONS

(A paper prepared by the GBC in Consultation with higher authorities . . . Mayapura, March, 1978).

In May 1977 His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada felt that his days in this material world were almost at an end. He traveled to Vrndavana and asked that his leading disciples come and join him. Specifically he called for the members of the Governing Body Commission, who manage the worldwide preaching activities of ISKCON. Within a few days they gathered, in fear of the imminent departure of His Divine Grace. At that time many last affairs of His Divine Grace were put in order. He wrote his last Will, entrusting everything to ISKCON, and assigned his disciples as trustees of the various ISKCON properties in India and around the world.

The GBC members met together in Vrndavana and prepared a few last questions to put before Srila Prabhupada. One very important question was how disciples would be initiated in the parampara after the departure of His Divine Grace. When asked this question, Srila Prabhupada replied that he would name some persons who could initiate disciples after his disappearance. We then asked him who the spiritual masters of such disciples would be. He replied that the new initiates would be the disciples of those whom he empowered to initiate and that he, Srila Prabhupada, would be their grand spiritual master. Then he said he would name the initiating gurus later. Srila Prabhupada appeared to recover somewhat in his health, and he dispatched the GBC men back to their preaching missions around the world. He stayed on in Vrndavana, but his disappearance still seemed imminent.

Then one day in June he gave his secretary the names of eleven disciples who would be the initiating disciples. Their names were :

- |                           |                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Kirtanananda Swami     | 7. Harikosa Swami    |
| 2. Jayapataka Swami       | 8. Ramasvara Swami   |
| 3. Banal Krsna Goswami    | 9. Hansadutta Swami  |
| 4. Satavarupa das Goswami | 10. Bhagavan dasa    |
| 5. Urdayananda Goswami    | 11. Jayatirtha dasa. |
| 6. Bhavananda Goswami     |                      |

Because of his illness, Srila Prabhupada had not awarded any initiations for months. On naming these disciples, he ordered that they become "rittic acaryas," which means that they were to initiate disciples on his behalf. He indicated, as he had said in May, that these rittic acaryas named by him would, after his disappearance, continue as initiating spiritual masters. He named eleven but said that the number could be increased in the future.

Now it is March 1978, the annual international gathering of ISKCON devotees at Sri Dhama Mayapura on the occasion of Gaura Purnima. After meeting and consulting with senior Vaishnavas and taking sastraic evidence, the GBC members have prepared the following statement of principles for carrying out the orders of Srila Prabhupada.

### FIRST AND SECOND INITIATIONS

Devotees ask, "If I received first initiation from Srila Prabhupada but now, after his disappearance, I receive second initiation from one of his appointed initiator gurus, what is my relationship with each of the spiritual masters?"

In coming to an answer, we must first know that harinama (first initiation) is the main initiation. The harinama is the main thing, and the second initiation is only to help the harinama. This is mentioned in Jiva Goswami's writings. Harinama diksa is bhagavati diksa, and initiation with the gayatri mantra is pancaratriki-diksa. The mantra is only to help harinama, so that one can reach the siddhi of harinama. Mantra's jurisdiction (pancaratriki diksa) is up to salvation, liberation, and after liberation harinama continues. The harinama circle is the greater circle, and the mantra diksa is a smaller circle within the harinama circle.

Those who have taken first initiation from Srila Prabhupada are his disciples mainly, and they will take help from the diksa guru, the guru who awards second initiation. There are a nama guru and mantra guru. If one has received first initiation from Srila Prabhupada and then second initiation from one of Srila Prabhupada's disciples, that disciple will be his mantra guru. The new disciple must offer respect both to his mantra guru and to Srila Prabhupada. The guru is one in many forms. Therefore we say, "vande ham sri guru sri yuta padakamalam sri gurun." Thus we address the guru as plural.

#### HOW TO CHOOSE A GURU

How does one know who is to be his guru? One must choose according to his sraddha, his faith. A newcomer should be given some time. He should consider to whom he will submit, based on his faith in him. There are five stages in successfully approaching a spiritual master, and the first is to hear (sravanam). The second stage is acceptance both by the preceptor and the disciple. Then sadhana, the attempt for realization, will begin. In the beginning, it is an open field: the candidate hears, and then the connection should come between guru and disciple. One should take help from senior Vaishnavas so as to avoid error.

#### SIKSA AND DIKSA GURUS

Sometimes devotees ask what the difference is between a siksa-guru and a diksa guru. The answer is found in the Caitanya Caritamrta: siksa-guru kevala vani krsnara svarupa. Both gurus are extensions of Krsna, Guru is Krsna. Acaryam nam vijanayam. Krsna has come to liberate us in His different appearances, or representations. Thus there is oneness in a variety of forms. Actually whoever sincerely helps me go forward towards Krsna is a siksa guru. Vaishnavas are also siksa gurus. There is the vartha-pradarsaka guru (the one who first shows one the path of spiritual life), the siksa guru, nama guru, mantra guru, and sannyasa guru. Whoever helps me the most in my spiritual progress is the main guru. If one is accepted by a nama-guru, then as long as the nama-guru is present one has only one guru. The nama-guru and mantra guru will be the same, and no other guru will be present. Only the vartha-pradarsaka guru may be present before the real guru. Thus during Srila Prabhupada's presence the ritviks he appointed were actually vartha-pradarsaka-gurus. But if after the nama-guru's departure one accepts a mantra-guru or sannyasa-guru, one should also offer full regard to him, seeing him as the representative of the previous guru.

#### ACCEPTING KARMA

When the guru first accepts the disciple, then the guru takes charge. There is an explanation of diksa, spiritual

initiation, in The Nectar Of Instruction, page 51. At the time of both first and second initiations, the guru accepts the disciple as he is and accepts charge of washing away the disciple's sins by his instructions. This can be done by the mercy of Srila Prabhupada. The main thing is that the new gurus must be transparent. The medium is so transparent that by guru parampara everything goes to Krsna in no time. He who has wholly given himself to his own guru, Srila Prabhupada, is actually a guru. The fully surrendered servant of Srila Prabhupada is guru. This is the criterion.

#### SEVERAL GURUS IN ONE TEMPLE

A delicate situation may arise when in one ISKCON temple there are disciples of different gurus. The natural way to avoid this is for a guru to perform diksa in his own zone. Srila Prabhupada deliberately chose gurus in different parts of the world to arrange for this. But this is only a general principle, and there may also be special arrangements.

#### WORSHIP OF HIS GURU

When a disciple of Srila Prabhupada's disciple performs worship, he will worship the portrait of his own guru. His guru's picture may be placed to the left of Srila Prabhupada's. If there are disciples of other gurus present in the temple, then the portraits of those gurus may also be put on the altar to the left of Srila Prabhupada. They should all be dealt with as Vaisnavas. In such a situation, the devotee performing worship--arati, for example--will first worship the picture of his own guru, then Srila Prabhupada then the Deities, and then he may offer worship to the other gurus. He worships his own guru as guru and the other gurus as Vaisnavas. Of course, we are all experiencing awkwardness and growing pains in the new procedures. But we have to appreciate that new disciples in the future will want to worship their own spiritual masters, and this is proper. We may start in this way, and time will gradually help us.

#### VYASASANAS

Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana should not be occupied by any of his disciples or by the picture of any disciple. The disciple of Srila Prabhupada who is now initiating will always regard His Divine Grace as his superior and cannot occupy that seat. A second seat, however, a little below Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana, should be given to the initiating guru. Thus the new disciples will see their guru is giving honor to His Divine Grace. This will impress the disciples: "Even my guru is also giving respect to his own guru, Srila Prabhupada, and in this way I must follow." This system of maintaining Srila Prabhupada's vyasasana as the main center of guru worship should be maintained not only in the present ISKCON temples but in any temples established in the future. Whatever we are creating is from the impression received from him. In this way we will all come within the same administration.

During guru-puja, disciples of Srila Prabhupada's disciples may first offer respect to their guru and then to Srila Prabhupada.

## PRANAM MANTRA

As far as a pranam mantra to be used by new disciples to offer respect to the initiating gurus, this common mantra may be used : Om ayanam-timirandhasya jnananiana-salakaya/caksur unmilitam yena tasmai sri-gurave namah. Or nama om visnupadaya with the new guru's name inserted ; that is also a general mantra. Visnupadaya means "unto the representative of Visnu." It means that the guru is at the feet of Krsna by virtue of his being at the feet of Srila Prabhupada.

These pranama mantras may be used unless and until a guru's disciples compile a special mantra for him. The guru should not arrange his own pranam mantra. But when the disciples make a mantra for guru-puja, with his special characteristics, then they may recite that mantra. The pranam mantra should be composed in perfect Sanskrit. In kirtan in ISKCON temples the nama om visnupadaya mantra with the new guru's name inserted should not be sung.

## HOW WILL MORE GURUS BE ADDED

Those who are already empowered to initiate will extend the number by their consideration. In this way it will have spiritual characteristics. The eleven picked by His Divine Grace will extend themselves. The area of initiating gurus should spread from this point, bigger, bigger, bigger.

## UNDERSTANDING ABSOLUTE FAITH IN ONE'S GURU

Our process is extremely autocratic. The guru is all in all. The submission to the guru is unconditional. This we find in all Srila Prabhupada's books. There is an expression, "If anyone marries, then a separate room is necessary." As long as one is not married, he doesn't need a separate room. But as soon as one marries, he wants a separate house. Similarly, as long as a Vaisnava does not initiate, he does not want any special place or special respect. But when he initiates he is absolute in the eyes of his disciples. The sisya will not tolerate any other Vaisnava's coming to disturb the absolute position of his guru. This is the heart's feeling or proper Vaisnava sentiment, and disciples of Srila Prabhupada should be sensitive to this and careful not to disturb the relationship between the new gurus and their disciples. Therefore there may be at least one place where the disciple can have his guru exclusively, where he will find, "My guru is absolute here." For example, on the birthday of the guru the disciples may gather and worship him exclusively with all their devotion. They will worship him exclusively as the representative of God, of Krsna. But other disciples may not feel very much encouraged by their behavior. They may feel, "Our faith in our guru is being disturbed by this. Now my guru is not absolute." It is a very subtle point of sentiment. In Krsna's camp also Radharani and Candravali and others contended. So we must prepare for that.

An example is given that every mother is most affectionate to her own son. The affection of each mother is absolute. But if one were to compare the affection of two mothers and try to determine who is more affectionate, one would see according to relative judgement.

In this way there are both relative and absolute calculation. But the absolute realization is supreme. In our ISKCON dealings these two conceptions have to be harmonized. Although one of the gurus may be a Godbrother to me, he is the worshipable guru of his disciple. Harmony of absolute and relative is seen in Krsna. He whom we think the supermost is being chastised by Yasoda. He is the supreme Deity, but He is carrying Nanda's shoes on His head. In this way we can learn to adjust absolute and relative.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion we humbly request all devotees to keep uppermost one of Srila Prabhupada's last instructions to us : "Your love for me will be demonstrated by how you cooperate amongst yourselves after my disappearance." Let us deal with each other in love and trust. It is unfortunate that His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada did not stay with us another 100 years in his physical presence.

That was not Krsna's desire. Therefore we have to see how his departure is a blessing. Now more than ever we must cooperate amongst ourselves. Let us not make the tragic mistake of the disciples who break into factions over party disputes and disobey the order of the spiritual master.

The carrying on of the Krsna Consciousness Movement means we must have new disciples. Therefore Srila Prabhupada has given us new gurus. Let us heartily welcome them in our midst. In this way we will find increased union even in separation from His Divine Grace.

## ADDENDUM #3 GBC ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 1979

GOVERNING BODY COMMISSION  
ANNUAL MEETING  
SRIDHAM MAYAPUR  
March 5, 1979  
Minutes

CHAIRMAN: Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja  
VICE-CHAIRMAN: Srila Hrdayananda Goswami  
SECRETARY: H.H. Adi Kesava Swami

### I. Review of Old Business

1. All standing committees must submit a written report to the Chairman of the GBC before the beginning of the committee meeting preceding the annual GBC Meeting at Mayapur.
2. That the names of Bali Mardan and Guru-krpa Swami be dropped from the list of GBC members.
3. That the Bhaktivedanta Memorial Committee, constituted at the annual meeting on March 18, 1978, review the situation of the purchase of 26 Second Avenue, New York (Srila Prabhupada's original temple) and make a report to the full body, including discussion of other activities of the committee during the past year.
4. Srila Satsvarupa Maharaja will submit a written report on the progress of the biography of Srila Prabhupada's life some time shortly after Gaura-purnima.
5. That the March 21, 1978 GBC Resolution No. 18 reading: "All children's books produced by ISKCON or affiliates or subsidiaries must have approval of the Minister of Education" is amended to read: "All children's books, including coloring books, produced by ISKCON or affiliates or subsidiaries must have approval of the Minister of Education."
6. That Resolution No. 19 of March 21, 1978 may be deleted, as it is obsolete.
7. That Resolution No. 25 of the March 21, 1978 GBC annual meeting may be deleted.
8. As per the Resolution No. 2 of the March 21, 1978 GBC annual meeting, a Festival Committee of Vicitravirya dasa, Srila Jaya Pataka Swami, Balavanta dasa, Vikradhara dasa and Mahendra dasa is appointed to oversee the activities of the 1980 Mayapur-Vrndavana Festival.

### II. Zonal Assignments of GBC Members

1. Srila Hrdayananda Maharaja is appointed GBC for Brazil and Uruguay, with H.H. Jagad-jivan Goswami appointed as Assistant GBC for Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Chile. H.H. Jagad-jivan Goswami will attend all general meetings of the GBC, but will not be a voting member.
2. Srila Jaya Pataka Swami will be the GBC for South India. Yasodanandana Swami will be the official Regional Secretary to assist the GBC in South India. He is appointed by the GBC in recognition of his many years of experience in preaching in South India.

3. An arbitration committee to assist the GBC of Andhra Pradesh to deal with the situation in Hyderabad is appointed: H.H. Brahmananda Swami, Svarupa Damodara Prabhu, Gopal Krsna Prabhu, H.H. Bhakti Caitanya Swami, Srila Hridayananda Goswami, Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja, Srila Bhavananda Goswami and Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami.
4. Srila Ramesvara Swami is appointed GBC of Los Angeles, Denver, San Diego, Laguna Beach, Japan and Hawaii.
5. Srila Bhagavan Goswami is appointed the GBC of South Europe, Israel, Mauritius and the Canary Islands.
6. Srila Harikesa Swami is appointed the GBC of Scandanavia, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Poland, DDR, CSSR, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Rumania, USSR, Lebanon and Egypt. He is the Co-GBC of Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.
7. Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja is appointed GBC of Great Britain, South Africa, East Africa and Detroit. He is the Co-GBC of New Delhi, Chandigarh and Michigan.
8. H.H. Pancadrapada Swami is appointed GBC of Mexico, Central America and Andhra Pradesh (including Hyderabad and Hyderabad Farm). He is the Co-GBC of Colombia and Ecuador. Mahamsa Swami is the assistant GBC for Hyderabad and Hyderabad Farm.
9. Balavanta Prabhu is appointed GBC of Miami, Gainesville, New Orleans, Atlanta, Anderson South Carolina, Murari Sevak and Mississippi Farm. He is the Co-GBC of Colombia and Ecuador.
10. Hari Sauri Prabhu is appointed GBC of Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea and Indonesia.
11. Rupanuga Prabhu is appointed GBC of Washington, D.C.
12. Srila Satsvarupa Goswami Maharaja is appointed GBC of Baltimore and Gita-nagari Farm.
13. Gopal Krsna Prabhu is appointed GBC of Canada, Bombay, Gujarat and is the Co-GBC of New Delhi.
14. H.H. Adi Kesava Swami is appointed the GBC of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Guyana.
15. Srila Hamsadutta Goswami is appointed GBC of Berkeley, Seattle, Portland, the Philippines, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore and Korea. He is the Co-GBC of China.
16. Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami is appointed GBC of Dallas, Houston, Chicago and St. Louis. He is the Co-GBC of China.
17. Srila Kirtanananda Swami is appointed GBC of New Vrindavana, Cleveland, Columbus, Erie, Pittsburgh, Venezuela and Santo Domingo.

18. Srila Jaya Pataka Swami is appointed the GBC of East India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sikkim, Orissa and South India. He is the Co-GBC of Assam and Tripura.
19. Srila Bhavananda Goswami is appointed the GBC of Vrndavana, Central India and is the Co-GBC of Mayapur and Michigan.
20. Vasudeva Prabhu is the GBC of Fiji.
21. H.H. Bhakti Caitanya Swami is appointed GBC of Pakistan, Chandigarh and North India. He is appointed GBC of Bhutan and the Andaman Islands if he goes there this year.
22. H.H. Brahmananda Swami is appointed the GBC of West Africa, North Africa and Central Africa.
23. Atreya Rsi Prabhu is appointed GBC of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Amman, Yemen and Afghanistan. He is the Co-GBC of Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Pakistan.
24. Jagaddisha Prabhu is appointed GBC of the Gurukula.
25. Svarupa Damodara Prabhu is appointed GBC of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram and Burma and also the Bhaktivedanta Institute. He is the Co-GBC of Assam and Tripura.
26. Srila Ramesvara Swami is the Co-GBC of Spiritual Sky Scented Products.
27. H.H. Adi Kesava Swami is appointed Co-GBC of the Bhaktivedanta Institute.

### III. Sannyasa Recommendations

1. If a GBC or initiating Guru who has recommended someone for sannyasa withdraws his recommendation, the candidacy is cancelled.
2. This is an amendment to the Resolutions found on "Notes and Index" of previous year's Resolutions, Page 5, No. 31. It shall read:

"That any GBC member can place a devotee on a two year trial period for sannyasa. After one year the GBC body will discuss the qualifications of the candidate and, pending their approval, the candidate will enter into the final one-year trial period. At the end of the final year, the GBC will vote for the appointment of the sannyasi."
3. The GBC body can waive the preliminary one year or two years suggested in the previous proposal by its own decision at the time of discussion of the candidates. (At this time the sannyasa-guru of the candidates should be specified.)
4. At the annual sannyasa meeting, the sannyasa candidates who have been approved by the GBC to take initiation will be reviewed, and if there is some objection from the Sannyasi Board, the GBC will review their decision, but the GBC's decision will be final.

5. The qualifications of a sannyasi are to be listed, and all candidates are to be examined on the basis of these qualifications before their names are accepted on the list of candidates for Sannyasa. The qualifications are as follows:
1. How free is he from sex desire?
    - a) How long has he been a brahmacari?
    - b) How long has he been living away from his wife?
  2. What is his preaching record? Is it demonstrated by his ability to preach strongly? Is he a preaching leader? Has he been doing this for a respectable amount of time?
  3. Is he very strict in his personal conduct? Is he beyond suspicion?
  4. Is he philosophically strong? Is this demonstrated through his lectures?
  5. Is he willing to accept fully the authority of the GBC and work under the auspices of the GBC?
  6. Does he have the proper quality of leadership to train and lead brahmacaris who are under his direction?
  7. Is he self-reliant? Has he the ability to keep himself continuously engaged in some way which contributes positively to our preaching work?
  8. Is the field of his preaching after taking sannyasa clear and acceptable to the GBC or other authorities?

6. Accepted for Sannyasa this year:

Ghanasyama dasa	(Srila Kirtanananda Swami)
Prabhavisnu dasa	(Srila Jaya Pataka Swami)
Ananta Svarupa dasa	(Srila Jaya Pataka Swami)
Bhagavat dasa	(Srila Jaya Pataka Swami)
	(On Lord Nityananda's Appearance Day in Bhuvanesvara)
Sivarama dasa	(Srila Satsvarupa Goswami)
Gopijanavallabha dasa	(Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami)
Svarupa Damodara dasa	(Srila Kirtanananda Swami)
Ganapati dasa	(Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami)
Hiranyagarbha dasa	(Srila Bhavananda Goswami)
Indradyumna dasa	(Srila Bhagavan Goswami)

7. Accepted for one-year trial period for Sannyasa:

Ranchor dasa	(Srila Bhavananda Goswami)
Kavichandra dasa	(Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami)
Bhavabhuti dasa	(Srila Jaya Pataka Swami)
Hari Sauri dasa	(Srila Bhavananda Goswami)
Kaladri dasa	(Srila Kirtanananda Swami)
Nitai Chand dasa	(Srila Bhavananda Goswami)
Mahatma dasa	(Srila Ramesvara Swami)
Madan Manohara dasa	(Srila Hridayananda Goswami)
Laksmi Nrsinghadev dasa	(Srila Satsvarupa Goswami)
Agrani dasa	(Srila Satsvarupa Goswami)

8. Accepted for two-year trial period for Sannyasa:

Janalata dasa	(Srila Kirtanananda Swami)
Suhotra dasa	(Srila Harikesa Swami)
Devamrta dasa	(Srila Harikesa Swami)

GBC Annual Meeting  
March 5, 1979

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Guru-Gauranga dasa	(Srila Harikesa Swami)
Dvarakesa dasa	(Srila Harikesa Swami)
Tribhuvanath dasa	(Srila Harikesa Swami)
Ramai dasa	(Hari Sauri Prabhu)
Mahavidya dasa	(Srila Bhagavan Goswami)
Locanananda dasa	(Srila Bhagavan Goswami)
Janardana dasa	(Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami)
Kalakantha dasa	(Srila Ramesvara Swami)
Buddhi Manta dasa	(Srila Hamsadutta Swami)
Vrajendra Kumara dasa	(H.H. Pancadravida Swami)
Urjesvat dasa	(H.H. Adi Kesava Swami)
Romapada dasa	(H.H. Adi Kesava Swami)
Vipramukhya dasa	(Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja)
Ambhujaksa dasa	(Srila Hydayananda Goswami)
Narahari dasa	(Balavanta Prabhu)
Prahladanandana dasa	(Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja)
Virabahu dasa	(Srila Kirtanananda Swami)
Rocan dasa	(Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja)

GOVERNING BODY COMMISSION  
ANNUAL MEETING  
SRIDHAM MAYAPUR  
March 6, 1979  
Minutes

In attendance:

Srila Satsvarupa dasa Goswami  
Balavanta dasa  
Rupanuga dasa  
Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja  
Srila Hydayananda dasa Goswami  
Gopal Krsna dasa  
H.H. Brahmananda Swami  
Srila Kirtanananda Swami  
Kaladri dasa  
Srila Harikesa Swami  
Dayananda dasa (for Atreya Rsi)

Srila Bhavananda Goswami  
Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami  
Srila Bhagavan Goswami  
Srila Ramesvara Swami  
H.H. Bhakta Caitanya Swami  
Srila Hamsadutta Swami  
Jagadisha dasa  
H.H. Jagad-jivan dasa Goswami  
Svarupa Damodara dasa  
H.H. Pancadravida Swami  
H.H. Adi Kesava Swami  
Hari Sauri dasa

RESOLUTIONS

1. Dayananda Prabhu will attend and comment in this year's meeting on behalf of Atreya Rsi Prabhu, who is unable to attend, but he will not vote in the meetings.

I. Sankirtana Book Distribution

1. Resolved: That at least the number of BTG's distributed during the year 1978 (approx. 340,000 per month) shall be distributed in subsequent years. (To insure this, an honor-quota system amongst the temples shall be used.)
2. Resolved: That the GBC request the BBT Trustees to find two senior devotees to work as editorial staff for the BTG.
3. Resolved: That each zone may give books to ISKCON centers in third-world countries like India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Africa and Latin America for establishing Krishna Conscious Reading Rooms. The temple contributing will receive sankirtana points for those books, and the recipients will not receive points. This proposal shall be announced at the Presidents' Meeting for their practical view-point as to application.
4. Resolved: That the sankirtana book point system as it exists presently for all countries in the world is fair and accepted, except for India, where a new point system has been approved. The Indian system is as follows:

16 paisa pamphlet	1/3 point
50 paisa small book	1 point
75 paisa small book	1-1/2 points
Rs 1.25 medium book	2 points
Rs 3, Rs 4 softbound book	6 points
Rs 6-1/2 softbound book	10 points
Rs 6-1/2 hardbound book	15 points
England BTG	1-1/2 points when distributed to life-members and 2-1/2 points when distributed on the street.

## II. Sankirtana--General Preaching

1. Resolved: That different levels of examination should be drawn up by a sastric regents' board composed of Srila Satsvarupa dasa Goswami, Srila Hridayananda Goswami, Svarupa Damodara Prabhu and Rupanuga Prabhu, along with a syllabus and correction key corresponding to the levels of Bhakti-sastri, Bhakti-vaibhava, etc. These examinations should be administered on a zonal level (at the discretion of the local GBC) semi-annually to those desirous of taking them, and the GBC man will utilize the results as he sees fit. Diplomas will be awarded according to the level of excellence achieved. GBC men who will be administering the examinations will first have to take the examination and submit it to the regents committee for grading and correction. When they have passed the examination, then they may administer the examination. Diplomas will be awarded by the regents' committee.
2. Resolved: That the GBC will hold a meeting of all members to discuss topics to be submitted at the start of the meeting by individual GBC members in an open forum. This meeting is recommended to be held on the day after the general meeting of the GBC body in Mayapur.
3. Resolved: That Svarupa Damodara Prabhu and H.H. Adi Kesava Swami will give a brief report in writing as to the activities of the Bhaktivedanta Institute.
4. Resolved: That Srila Ramesvara Swami be given permission, pending final approval by the Property Committee, to start a zonal farm in Denver, and to relocate the zonal Gurukula one hour outside of L.A. (in country setting).
5. Resolved: That Srila Harikesa Swami be given permission to start a farm in Passau, Germany.
6. Resolved: That GBC proposals are not to be considered obsolete until they are deleted by the vote of the general meeting.
7. Resolved: That the GBC request the BBT to investigate the preaching-by-mail program proposed by H.H. Jayadvaita Swami.
8. Resolved: That Gopal Krsna Prabhu replace H.H. ADi Kesava Swami as North American representative of the International Life Membership Committee.

## III. Resolutions Regarding Initiating Acaryas

1. Resolved: That all Krsna conscious literature shall be published by the BBT, and the publishing and distribution shall be considered according to its own merit and preaching value by the International BBT Trustees, or those whom they authorize.
2. Resolved: That for the year 1979 no new initiating gurus will be appointed.

3. Resolved: That initiation may be given to a devotee outside of a guru's zone if he/she receives the recommendation of the local temple president, GBC and initiating guru.
4. Resolved: That the GBC should establish a specific method of chanting the Prema-dhvani at the end of kirtan.
  - a) First the "Jaya-om-visnupada" with the name of the present resident acarya should be chanted. Next should be chanted the name of the predecessor-acarya (who happens to be in all present cases Srila Prabhupada), then his predecessor-acarya, then his predecessor-acarya, etc. Then should be chanted "ISKCON-Founder-Acarya-A.C. Bhaktivedanta-Swami-Prabhupada-kijaya!" This should be chanted just before chanting "Namacarya-Srila-Haridas-Thakura-kijaya."
  - b) If more than one of the acaryas are present, then the Prema-dhvani should be chanted by speaking the "Jaya-om-visnupada" from the juniormost member to the seniormost member of the assembly. (Obviously one does not have to master the exact seniority, but should give the names of all the acaryas present.) After chanting the names of all the assembled acaryas, then one chants the "Jaya-om-visnupada" for Srila Prabhupada, etc.
  - c) If disciples of initiating acaryas other than the resident acarya are present, then one may chant--after chanting the "Jaya-om-visnupada" part of the Prema-dhvani--"ISKCON-vartmanacarya-vrnda-kijaya." It is also suggested that before the chanting of "Ananta-koti-vaisnavrnda-kijaya" one may also chant "ISKCON-GBC-kijaya."

#### IV. Standards of Action

1. Resolved: That a GBC committee for investigation and prevention of illegal practices be formed. This committee may consist of Srila Hrdayananda dasa Goswami, Srila Hamsadutta Swami, Rupanuga dasa Adhikari, H.H. Pancadravida Swami, Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja and Srila Bhavananda Goswami.
2. Resolved: That the GBC Chairman shall see that all ISKCON properties are properly registered to fulfill Srila Prabhupada's desire. It should be done this year, and all GBC must give full co-operation.
3. Resolved: That whenever there is a change of management in a temple or zone, the new management must accept all existing debts to BBT.
4. Resolved: That as an amendment to Resolution No. 1. of the Amendments to the GBC Resolution of March 22, 1978 and Resolution No. 24 of the general GBC meeting of March 21, 1978:

No one shall consult any astrologer unless he is certified as a genuine Krsna conscious astrologer by the GBC. The Bhaktivedanta Institute has been given the assignment to study this matter.

Since astrology has a basis within the secondary Vedic literature (Jyotir--an Upa-veda) the GBC does not condemn it, as the GBC would not condemn the Ayur-veda. However, as the GBC does not see any relevance of astrology within ISKCON or find anyone expert enough to properly utilize such an astrologer or his findings, it recommends that all approaches to astrologers be restricted, and that the subject be left to the Bhaktivedanta Institute to research in order to utilize it for the good of the people in general. Others who are practicing it within ISKCON for the so-called interest of the devotees, should be censured before they cause any obstruction or difficulty for devotees who are sincerely attempting to engage in the service of the Supreme Lord.

5. Resolved: That in accordance with Srila Prabhupada's desire, a committee of Srila Hrdayananda dasa Goswami and Srila Satsvarupa dasa Goswami will research a system for awarding specific titles for excellence in service on the zonal level to devotees who have distinguished themselves in various fields of devotional endeavor.

V. Resolutions Regarding Privilege

1. Resolved: That the yearly GBC Secretary will write a letter to all ISKCON centers warning about the poisonous activities of Kailas Chandra dasa.
2. Resolved: That H.H. Trivikrama Swami be appointed the Co-Director of the ISKCON Chandigarh Project and give association to H.H. Bhakti Caitanya Swami.
3. Resolved: That a three man committee be appointed to assist Srila Kirtanananda Swami and go to Venezuela with him to resolve any discrepancies that might be found there. The following are appointed to that committee: Srila Harikesa Swami, Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja, Srila Hrdayananda dasa Goswami and Rupanuga Prabhu.
4. Resolved: That Sri Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir set aside a room for ISKCON Sweden. It is further recommended that Gopal Krsna Prabhu investigate the bank transfer from New York to Bombay for 4,000 dollars, and if it is shown that Bombay improperly received the money, then Bombay must repay it within six months at 12% interest to Mayapur.

VI. GBC Organization--Current

1. Resolved: That the following Big-Brother GBCs are appointed for the year 1979:

Africa	Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja
Mayapur	Srila Ramesvara Swami and Srila Harikesa Swami
Vrndavana	Hari Sauri Prabhu
Orissa	H.H. Adi Kesava Swami
Manipur	Balavanta Prabhu
Chandigarh	Srila Hamsadutta Swami
Haridaspur	H.H. Pancadravida Swami (Note: Srila Harikesa Swami will make financial help through H.H. Pancadravida Swami for Haridaspur Project, and H.H. Pancadravida Swami will be informed about this commitment.)

Bombay will take a giant step forward in the history of the Indian Yatras and will not take on any Big-Brother.

Ahmenabad	Gopal Krsna Prabhu
Fiji	Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami

2. Resolved: That an international life membership trust be formed to help develop a more mature relationship with the worldwide life membership community. A general office will be formed in London to help co-ordinate the efforts of such a trust.

VII. GBC Parliamentary Organization

1. Resolved: That as an amendment to the Standing Orders, section No. 3, No. 2b., strike and rewrite as follows: The GBC Chairman and one other officer may, upon recognition of an emergency that cannot wait until Mayapur and that cannot be resolved in any other way, appoint a three-man GBC action committee to go and study the situation. If the report of the action committee indicates that the situation is so serious that it cannot wait until Mayapur and it cannot be resolved in any other way then--and only then--the Chairman and officer should notify all GBC secretaries of the convening of an extraordinary general meeting. The extraordinary meeting shall deal only with the particular emergency situation at hand and not with any other issues. This meeting will require 51% of all GBC secretaries to make a quorum, and its decisions will be binding upon the Society until the next Mayapur meeting, at which time the GBC must approve or disapprove its actions.
2. Resolved: That mid-year zonal changes will require an extraordinary general meeting, as described in the Standing Orders, Section 3, No. 2b.
3. Resolved: That the yearly Index of GBC Resolutions and Suggestions be published in proper booklet form and distributed yearly to the Society as soon as possible after the Mayapur meeting by the annual Secretary.
4. Resolved: That the GBC recognizes that as per Srila Prabhupada's instructions that GBC men may have thousands of secretaries, individual GBC men may see the need for appointing assistants who will have greater responsibility than temple presidents, and will be known as Regional Secretaries.
5. Resolved: That in addition to the one week in Mayapur and one week in Vrndavana spent during the annual Mayapur-Vrndavana Pilgrimage, at least one major pandal program in another city should be scheduled, and devotees are requested to attend.
6. Resolved: That no ISKCON Food Relief funds received from abroad can be used for feeding ISKCON devotees, except for the Mayapur Gurukula.
7. Resolved: That a committee to investigate ISKCON Food Relief and give recommendations as to how devotees in the West can become more aware of its activities is appointed. That committee is as follows: Balavanta Prabhu, Jagaddisha Prabhu, Srila Jaya Pataka Swami, H.H. Adi Kesava Swami and Gopal Krsna Prabhu.

VIII. Financial and Manpower Resolutions

1. The GBC recommends that the BBT Trustees give a loan of 15,000 Dollars to ISKCON Manipur.
2. Resolved: That the GBC recommends that the Mayapur-Vrndavana Fund attempt to give immediate financial assistance to Chandigarh construction and determine what can be done to help in this regard.

IV. Zonal Appointments

1. Resolved: That H.H. Pancadravida Swami will be the GBC of Andra Pradesh (including Hyderabad Temple and Hyderabad Farm). Mahamsa Swami is appointed as the acting Assistant GBC for Hyderabad and Hyderabad Farm. Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja has been requested to act as the initiating guru in Pancadravida Swami's Indian zone, and

Srila Harikesa Swami is appointed the Big-Brother GBC for Hyderabad and Hyderabad Farm. H.H. Mahamsa Swami will travel in the West for four months during the next year. He will travel for two months in Bhagavan Maharaja's zone and two months in H.H. Pancadravida Swami's Latin American zone.

2. Resolved: That Balavanta Prabhu and H.H. Pancadravida Swami are Co-GBCs for Colombia and Ecuador.

X. Resolutions on North America

1. Resolved: That the scope of the GBC Regional Committee (like the North American GBC Committee) is to resolve issues of importance for the region. Its resolutions must be ratified by the annual GBC meeting at Mayapur and are not to be acted upon until such ratification is complete.
2. Resolved: That April is designated as BTG marathon month. Only BTGs will be distributed, except by airport distributors who cannot adjust their distribution.
3. Resolved: That no drug or sex-related paraphernalia can be sold by ISKCON devotees.
4. Resolved: That the Bhaktivedanta Institute will move to Philadelphia for a trial period of one year. H.H. Adi Kesava Swami and Svarupa Damodara will be Co-Directors and Co-GBCs.
5. Resolved: That the GBC will establish a national traveling Rathayatra Program. Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami, Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja and Srila Ramesvara Swami will be the GBC committee in charge.
6. Resolved: That each North American GBC man should submit a proposal at the annual Mayapur meeting as to what loans he requests for the following year.
7. Resolved: That Srila Ramesvara Swami and Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja will be Co-GBC for the FATE Exhibition.
8. Resolved: That the GBC ratifies the resolutions of the GBC Legal Committee in regard to the organization of the National Legal Office.

XI. Other Resolutions

1. Resolved: That Hari Sauri Prabhu be a member of the Mayapur Development Committee.
2. Resolved: That H.H. Trivikram Swami will work in Korea as well as in Chandigarh this year.
3. Resolved: That the following resolution in regard to record distribution: Anyone who wants to make a record for sankirtana distribution should submit a demo, lyrics and an explanation of how it will be produced to a committee of Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja, Srila Ramesvara Swami and H.H. Adi Kesava Swami for their review.
4. Resolved: That Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja be made GBC of Iceland.
5. Resolved: That although all respects should be shown to His Holiness Sridhar Maharaja and the other senior Vaisnavas of the Gaudiya Math, no one should

GBC Annual Meeting  
March 6, 1979

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independently approach these respected personalities with the intention of begging advice or opinions regarding management or any controversial matters pertaining to ISKCON. The GBC has been designated by Srila Prabhupada as the highest ISKCON authority and the final word rests with that body in all ISKCON affairs.

PROPOSALS FROM TEMPLE PRESIDENT'S MEETING

SRIDHAM MAYAPUR

March 8, 1979

Ratified by GBC March 9, 1979

1. Resolved: That regional secretaries should also be included in the President's meeting.
2. Resolved: That a second meeting of Temple Presidents be held and that it should be in the form of a workshop where Presidents can informally exchange ideas on how to spread Krsna consciousness.
3. It is the duty of each GBC man to organize college preaching and to engage the temple presidents in that preaching work.
4. Srila Hrdayananda Goswami and H.H. Adi Kesava Swami will prepare a position paper on dramas in ISKCON.
5. Srila Jaya Pataka Swami and Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja will prepare a more complete Vaisnava calendar and distribute it to the temple presidents.

NEW RESOLUTIONS

1. Resolved: That an education committee composed of Jagadisha, Balavanta, Srila Jaya Pataka Swami, Svarupa Damodara, Srila Ramesvara Swami, H.H. Pancadravida Swami, Srila Bhagavan Goswami, H.H. Adi Kesava Swami, Srila Jayatirtha Maharaja, Srila Tamal Krishna Goswami be appointed to study the issues of development of ISKCON's primary and secondary educational programs in relation to the development of varnasramdharma.
2. Resolved: That Jagadisha Prabhu will organize a three-day seminar within the next few months in order to discuss these issues of education.

## ADDENDUM #4

340 WEST 55TH STREET, APRIL 22, 1979, TEMPLE ROOM ACTIVITIES

This addendum consists of pictures of one of the many initiation ceremonies held in the temple room of Their Lordships Sri Sri Radha Govinda. The purpose here is solely and wholly to show what took place and the devotees who participated. It's all about providing photographic proofs of the devotional activities of Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira Manhattan, such as the daily congregational chanting of the holy names: HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE years ago.



Temple Room facing southeast

Brahmanas in the photo above from left to right: Kesiha dasa brahmacari (ACBSP), a full time book distributor and a most humble devotee whom the author had the great fortune to live right across the hall from on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor brahmacari ashrama, Lokamangala dasa brahmacari (ACBSP), the well known devotee actor and elder brother of Akrura das brahmacari, Prana dasa brahmacari (ACBSP), Yaduganguli dasa brahmacari (ACBSP), another full time book distributor and Krsnot Kirtana dasa brahmacari (ACBSP), a surrendered pujari servant of Their Lordships Jagannatha, Baladeva and Lady Subhadra. In between Prana prabhu and Yaduganguli prabhu is the elder brother of the author, Bhakta Lawrence.



Temple Room facing northeast

Here we are facing the matajis in the northeast corner of the temple room. The only mataji whose name I recall is the very tall one in the center background in the dark sari. I believe she is mother Ragatmika devi dasi (ACBSP) who at the time was the leader of the ladies sankirtan party.



Since these photos were taken by my brother Lawrence it stands to reason that I would be at the center of them. I am the infinitesimally small eternal spirit soul inside the bespectacled, mostly Sicilian, white body looking up at Prana dasa.

Bhagavad-gita, As It Is, 1972 MacMillan Company Edition  
Chapter 2, Text 13, Purport excerpt:

...every living entity is an individual soul, each is changing his body every moment, manifesting sometimes as a child, sometimes as a youth, and sometimes as an old man. Yet the same spirit soul is there and does not

undergo any change. This individual soul finally changes the body at death and transmigrates to another body...either material or spiritual...

Bhagavad-gita, As It Is, 1972 MacMillan Company Edition  
Chapter 2, Text 17, Purport excerpts:

...When the upper point of a hair is divided into one hundred parts and again each of such parts is further divided into one hundred parts, each such part is the measurement of the dimension of the spirit soul...

...There are innumerable particles of spiritual atoms, which are measured as one ten-thousandth of the upper portion of the hair...

...The soul is atomic in size and can be perceived by perfect intelligence. This atomic soul is floating in the five kinds of air [*prana, apana, vyana, samana* and *udana*], is situated within the heart, and spreads its influence all over the body of the embodied living entities. When the soul is purified from the contamination of the five kinds of material air, its spiritual influence is exhibited...

...According to the *Mundaka Upanisad*, this atomic soul is situated in the heart of every living entity, and because the measurement of the atomic soul is beyond the power of appreciation of the material scientists, some of them assert foolishly that there is no soul. The individual atomic soul is definitely there in the heart along with the Supersoul, and thus all the energies of bodily movement are emanating from this part of the body. The corpuscles which carry the oxygen from the lungs gather energy from the soul. When the soul passes away from this position, activity of the blood, generating fusion, ceases...

Bhagavad-gita, As It Is, 1972 MacMillan Company Edition  
Chapter 2, Text 20:

*na jayate mriyate va kadacin  
nayam bhutva bhavita va na bhuyah  
ajo nityah sasvato'yam purano  
na hanyate hanyamane sarire*

Translation:

For the soul there is never birth nor death. Nor, having once been, does he ever cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, undying and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.



Here is Satsvarupa dasa Goswami seated on the small vyasasana next to the garlanded painting and vyasasana of ISKCON Founder-Acarya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami. Below SDG and seated on the floor is the brahmana Kavidatta dasa brahmacari (ACBSP), another full time book distributor, who chanted Sanskrit slokas from sastra during the fire sacrifice.



Here, seated in the front row second from left in the photo is Veda Vyasa Priya dasa, now swami, awaiting his brahminical or second initiation.



One of the two Vaisnavas in the front row on the left is Siva Radhya dasa, also awaiting second initiation. It is hard to distinguish which one.



"What are the four rules?"

"No illicit sex, no intoxication, no meat eating and no gambling."



"So everyday you chant at least sixteen rounds. Your name is now Jagannatha dasa." A joyously loud "JAYA" and applause burst from the assembled Vaisnavas.



"Jagannatha means the Lord of the universe. So you are the servant of the Lord of the universe."



Photograph by Jai Sri devi dasi (SDG)

All of the following photos of the initiation ceremony which took place on April 22, 1979 in the temple room of Sri Sri Radha Govinda Mandira Manhattan were supplied to the author by His Grace Akrura dasa brahmacari many years prior to his passing from our vision.

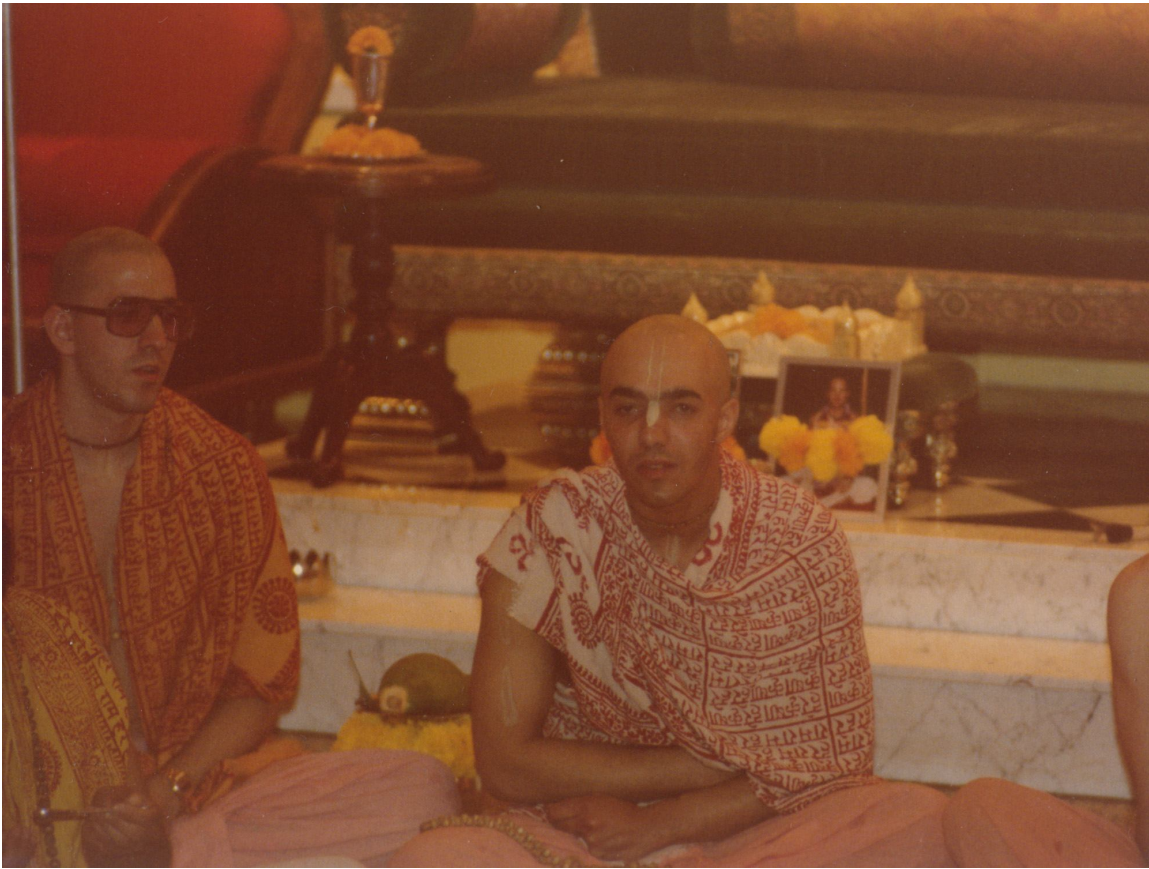


In the center of the above photo next to the microphone is Adi Kesava dasa [then swami], who conducted the fire sacrifice. On the far right on the edge of the photo and seated is the brahmana Srila dasa brahmacari (ACBSP), full time book distributor, who chanted Sanskrit slokas from sastra during the agni hotra. Standing in the background in front of the right side of the window is the brahmana Deva Rata dasa brahmacari (ACBSP) a full time book distributor and on the left side of the window is the brahmana Siddhajana das brahmacari (ACBSP).



In the above photo standing next to Satsvarupa dasa Goswami holding a camera is Jai Sri devi dasi (SDG). Standing in front of the blackboard in the

background on the right is Bhakta Mitch the following month given the name Muchakunda dasa brahmacari (SDG).



Bhakta John and Bhakta Al.



Seated behind Adi Kesava with dandas are Bhakti Tirtha Swami and Brahmananda Swami.



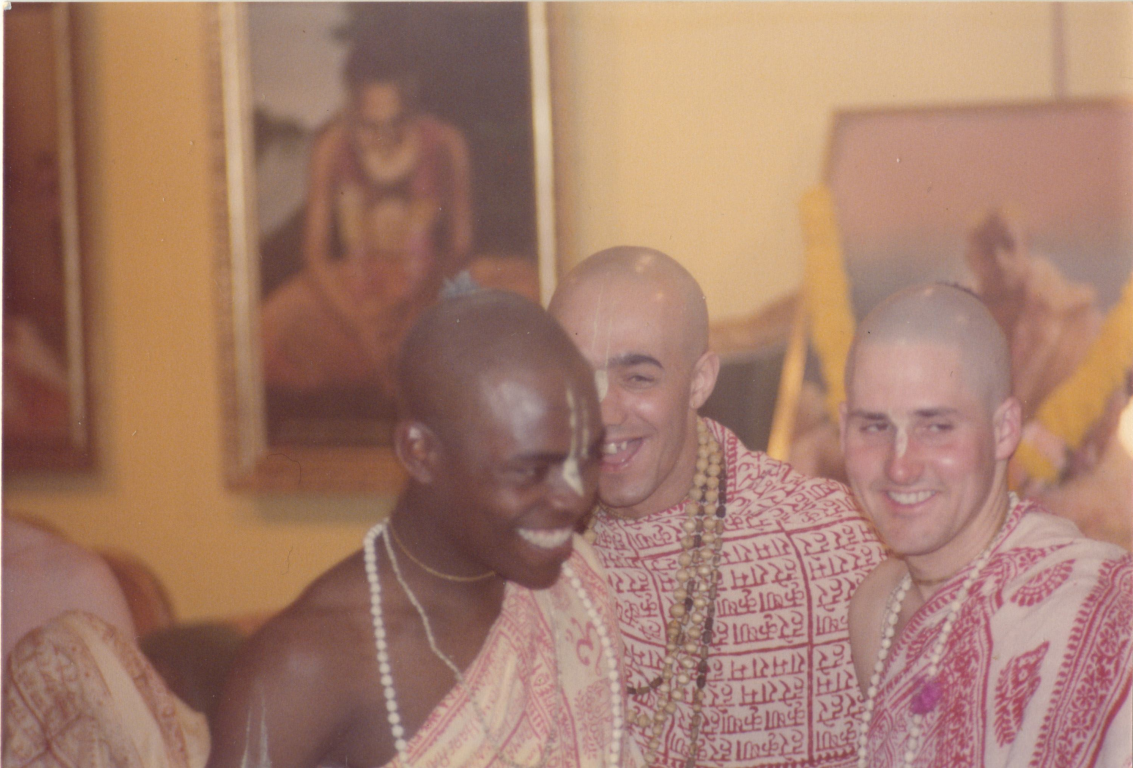
"Swaha...swaha...swaha..."







Above is the only clear photo of some of the matajis who received spiritual names that day. Unfortunately we do not have a clear view of their effulgent faces. The very tall Vaisnava is Bhakta Tony who received the name Abhimanyu dasa brahmacari.



Newly named Jiva Tattva dasa brahmacari, Akrura dasa brahmacari and Daruka dasa brahmacari.

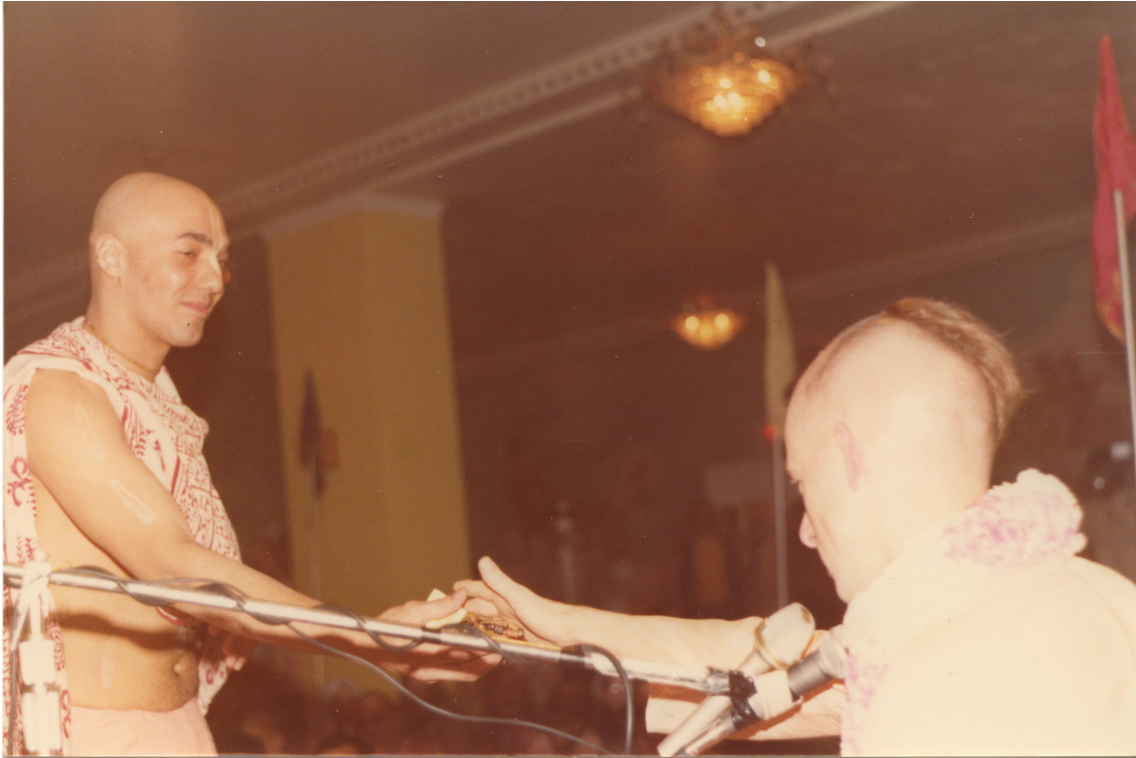


Photo by Jai Sri devi dasi (SDG)

"Your name is now Akrura dasa." "JAYA!"

*I offer my apologies to all of the matajis who also received spiritual names on April 22, 1979. Due to circumstances beyond my control, not being the photographer, I do not and did not at any time possess any photos containing clear views of your auspicious attendance in the proceedings. As you can see, even the one below, the only one with a face front view, is partially obstructed.*



## ADDENDUM #5

ANTIQUES, SECOND AVENUE, NYC, 1949

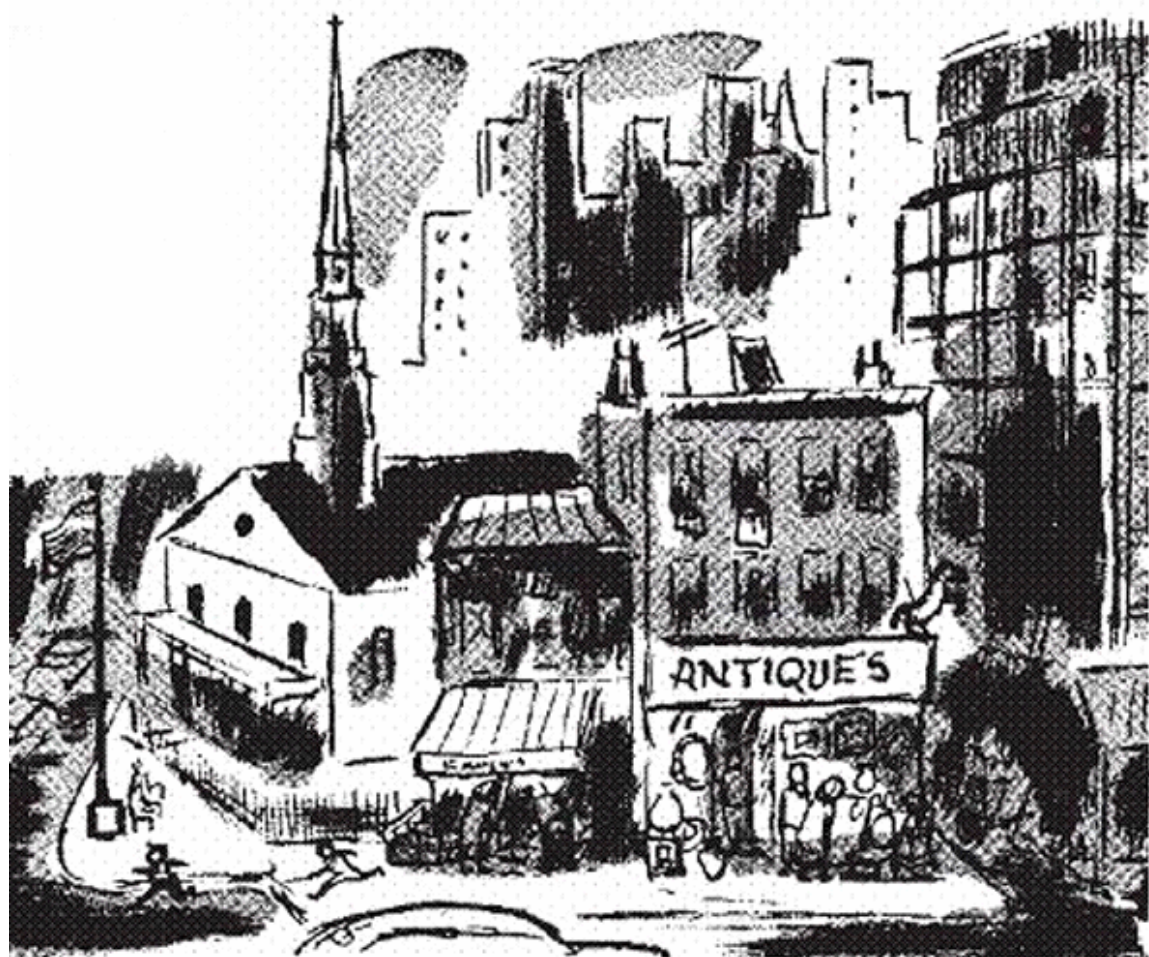
MAGAZINE ARTICLE FOUND DURING INTERNET RESEARCH BY THE AUTHOR

The following is an illustration with accompanying brief excerpt to add context; the illustration being the main focus; from a story published in the Reporter Magazine, December 20, 1949 entitled "New York...Second Avenue".

Unfortunately there is no mention of the antique shop pictured where 17 years hence His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami would inaugurate the chanting of the holy names – HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE / HARE RAMA HARE RAMA RAMA RAMA HARE HARE – in the Western World and establish the International Society for Krishna Consciousness also known as the Hare Krishna Movement. It may be said that there would be no skyscraper temple without this first temple. Also, please note the illustration was meant to give a general idea of the neighborhood streets and buildings and not meant to be architecturally accurate.



Excerpt for context: "Downtown...where Houston Street turns into the beginnings of Second Avenue...Second Avenue Theater...Jewish Art Theater...the dingy Second Avenue Baths boastfully advertises television..."





SRI NATHJI

WONDERFUL KRISHNA